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“Where the west began: Environment, transportation, and capitalism in Marion County, Indiana, 1820-1860”

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**“Where the west began: Environment, transportation, and capitalism in Marion
County, Indiana, 1820-1860”**

by

Kelly Wenig

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: History

Program of Study Committee:
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The student author and the program of study committee are solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alteration after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2017

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines Midwestern development and focuses on the early development of Marion County, Indiana, through the end of the Civil War and examines the ways that the region's overwhelmingly rural residents adapted to the challenges and successes of the urban growth and market interconnectivity that they sought from the moment of settlement. Starting with initial meetings of the Marion County Commissioners and examining major municipal turning points including the passage of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill, the Panic of 1837, the arrival of the first railroad a decade later, and the onset of the Civil War, it argues that Hoosiers, rather than trying to remain disconnected from external markets as proposed by some historians, immediately pushed for market participation but had difficulty dealing with the unforeseen consequences of their actions. It ultimately demonstrates that Americans had a powerful desire to foster market capitalism in the early republic but lacked the foresight to critically examine the potential for negative externalities.

This dissertation has two goals. First, it reorients the history of the transition to capitalism toward the Old Northwest, a region relatively ignored by historians interested in the onset of the so-called "market revolution" along the eastern seaboard. This timely re-examination of Midwestern economic and social change allies itself with the "New History of Capitalism," and challenges historians to expand their focus beyond the Northeast to engage with the rest of the American experience during the long nineteenth century. Second, it engages a small but growing movement to reorient the history of American Western development east of the Mississippi River. Indianapolis presents historians with a unique opportunity to examine the process of the transition to capitalism

in an area that is firmly on the border of East and West during the early nineteenth century. Bridging a gap between these two burgeoning historiographies, this research contributes to studies of American social and economic history, borderlands, regional identity and the environment.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1829, a young western merchant named Nicholas McCarty found himself in a particularly troubling dilemma. His shipment of dry goods, purchased from Philadelphia manufacturers, arrived at Pittsburgh ready to take a steamboat down the Ohio River to the small town of Madison, Indiana, between Cincinnati and Louisville. From there, the goods were to be unloaded into Conestoga wagons and shipped along an old Native American footpath north to McCarty's store on the southwest corner of Washington and Pennsylvania Streets in the recently established state capital of Indianapolis. Unfortunately, when McCarty arrived in Pittsburgh with his goods, the Ohio River was already frozen due to an unusually cold fall. His merchandise would either have to remain in the future Steel City until the spring thaw, or he would have to pay for expensive overland transportation across the state of Ohio on the National Road.¹ He was nearing the unpleasant position of disappointing either his customers or his creditors. If he waited until spring, his customers would be more likely to purchase goods from other merchants in the future, while immediately transporting his goods overland would bankrupt his burgeoning business. McCarty needed to pay for the extra cost of transportation along the new National Road. To cover these costs, he partnered with James Blake, a local businessman, to pay cash for ginseng from Marion County farmers, dry it at his "Sang Factory," and prepare it for a return trip to Pittsburg.²

¹ Berry Robinson Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana, Part One* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co, 1884), 116.

² Blake's "factory" was little more than a barn where a few temporary employees would process and dry the root. One discussion of ginseng's value is seen in Alvar Carlson, "Ginseng: America's Botanical Drug Connection to the Orient," *Economic Botany* 40 (1986): 233-249.

Although McCarty's business would survive, he would have to begrudgingly split the profits with his new partner.

McCarty's frustration emanated from the fact that the opportunity to reap sizable profits was available. He knew that the burgeoning population of Indianapolis needed finished goods and that the city was too new to create them. The city's 1900 residents—especially after only ten years of settlement in a hard-to-reach outpost—had little to trade for goods from East Coast merchants other than agricultural products. The ability to obtain and transport goods to the new city would handsomely reward any brave entrepreneur willing to assume the risk of transport and sustain the Hoosier capital until it could encourage its own industries. McCarty—in order to capitalize on this market potential—recognized that he needed to make his products available on a regular basis and at low cost to prevent competitors from opening shops and eliminating his virtual monopoly on long-distance trade in finished goods in Marion County.

McCarty's problem mirrored the problem for all residents of Indianapolis. There was a will to connect to outside markets, but not a way. Technological and infrastructural weaknesses in early American society prevented Hoosiers from accessing outside markets so they could sell excess crops in exchange for the creature comforts of the day. The only effective transportation technology available in the Old Northwest in this period was limited to boat travel on rivers. If the environment was uncooperative, all but the most local of commercial activities ground to a halt. Unfortunately for Hoosiers like Nicholas McCarty, the state legislature chose the wrong location for their new state capital. Upon order from the state legislature, surveyors laid out a site at the confluence of Fall Creek and the western fork of the White River in central Marion County. The

potential for water access would allow residents of Indianapolis the opportunity to use steam power to obtain goods and set up trade networks within the economic system of the western United States. However—as Hoosiers quickly found out—the White River was far too shallow and sandy to allow anything but the lightest boat traffic. In 1831, the steamboat *Robert Hanna* actually made it to the city, arousing a great hope for the future prospects of the city, but ran aground upon a sandbar on which it remained until the following spring. For residents of 1830s Marion County, the available transportation technology could not overcome natural environmental barriers in landlocked regions of the United States and prevented them from undergoing the same changes that were occurring in western river towns such as Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis or New Orleans. Steamboats were as useless to central Indiana Hoosiers as a canal without water.

This problem was doubly frustrating because of the unmistakable transformations in the United States during the same period. Industrial change brought the seedlings of modern capitalism. Wage labor replaced the artisan system in major cities and allowed enterprising industrialists and investors to reap profits from separating workers and the means of production.³ Industrial growth, beginning in New England, spread throughout the Northeastern part of the United States allowing for the production of durable goods for the rest of the country. McCarty—along with all other attentive merchants—certainly would have heard about the development of manufactories in cities that streamlined production and drove down the price of goods. At the same time, the Appleton, Lowell,

³ Two of the foundational works on this topic are E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1964) and Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974).

and Slater groups began constructing early factories during the nineteenth century and urban society became directly tied to surrounding rural areas in ever widening distant regions. Boston factory workers needed food from upstate New York and Pennsylvania in 1810 and from Indiana and Illinois by 1850. Northeastern textile mills needed Southern cotton. Cities needed progressively more timber from western states to build lodging for workers. Urban society, far from pulling away from rural society, became increasingly dependent on an ever-expanding base from which to obtain sustaining resources.⁴

The rise of urban centers also changed rural society. As railroad networks extended into the countryside during the first half of the nineteenth century to residents not near natural waterways, goods produced in New England factories became readily available for the first time. Farmers could send their excess products to a market for national or international consumption. They could increase cash-crop production and focus less on subsistence-style living. Increasingly populated farmlands in the trans-Appalachian West needed complex infrastructures to ship those crops to urban markets. For McCarty and other enterprising Americans, these changes were the harbingers of fortune. The western edge of the gradually, but relentlessly, expanding national dynamo

⁴ For changes in the economy and its effect on society in the United States see Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). For technological change and its effect on the economy see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). For examples of how economic and social change affected rural society in the United States see Lou Ferleger, *Agriculture and National Development: Views on the Nineteenth Century* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1990); Clarence Danhof, *Change in Agriculture: The Northern United States, 1820-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); Paul W. Gates, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture, 1815-1860* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1960); Allan Bogue, *From Prairie to Corn Belt: Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Ivan R. Dee, 2011).

that was the United States provided forward-thinking, enterprising Americans with the chance to seize the opportunities of an increasingly interconnected economic age.

Historians have long debated how best to characterize the economic development of the United States. Influential early historians like Charles Beard argued that the economic development of the United States was driven by class conflict. In their most famous instance, they argued that the debates over independence were driven by economic interests of the founding fathers and their quest to remain at the top of society.⁵ Their interpretations fell out of favor during the 1950s when the Cold War made this view unpopular but re-accelerated in the 1960s when historians began to examine the *mentalité* of market-oriented farmers. New Left historians such as Michael Merrill and James Henretta began studying the mindset of historical actors to understand the ideology that underlay early American society. These historians—labeled the “social” school—studied settlement patterns and family economic strategies to argue that until the early nineteenth century, Americans were focused on preserving family institutions and continuing “traditional” cultural patterns of “self-sufficiency” instead of focusing their energies on producing for market sale.⁶ They were convinced that the United States was not always “capitalist” and that the institution emerged sometime after the American Revolution. Their opponents—dubbed the “market” school—argued that Americans sought marketplace opportunities long before the Revolution which, they suggest, proves

⁵ Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921).

⁶ Michael Merrill, “Cash is good to eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States,” in *Radical History Review* 13 (1977): 42-71; James Henretta, “Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 35 (1978): 3-32; Christopher Clark, “Household Economy, Market Exchange and the Rise of Capitalism in the Connecticut Valley, 1800-1860,” *Journal of Social History* 13 (1979): 169-189.

the existence of a capitalist orientation at the nation's conception. Winifried Rothenberg, for example, examined rural Massachusetts economic patterns to argue that Americans have been "capitalist" in their accumulative patterns as early as they had access to markets; as long as there was trade, Rothenberg asserts, there was a capitalist mindset.⁷ For Rothenberg and others, the transformation of the early nineteenth century was one of scope, not style.⁸ The most controversy in this period emerged from Charles Sellers' *The Market Revolution*. His tome argued that the market emerged during the 1820s and 1830s as a revolutionary force that swept Americans into an international net that ruthlessly and impersonally decided the value of one's labor and established bourgeois capitalism as the middle-class ideology of the United States. For Sellers, the brief era of Jacksonian democracy was the last gasp of cultural and social authority that the lower-classes had against the moneyed elite. The market revolution was a process by which opposition to the established social and cultural order of wealth and respectability was eliminated.

The 1990s saw a major shift in the debate over the nature of capitalism in the United States as the term "transition to capitalism" emerged in the historiography. Sellers' book provided fuel to the flames of the debate, but a noticeably different trend emerged with Christopher Clark's publication of *The Roots of Rural Capitalism*, which closed the gap between social and market schools. It acknowledges that markets existed before the massive economic change of the 1820s but argues they were not as powerful

⁷ Winifred Rothenberg, "The Emergence of a Capital Market in Rural Massachusetts, 1730-1838," *Journal of Economic History* 45 (1985): 781-808; idem, "The Emergence of Farm Labor Markets and the Transformation of the Rural Economy," *Journal of Economic History* 48 (1988): 537-566.

⁸ For an examination of this particular era of debate, see Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 46 (1989): 120-144.

as described by the “market” school. Instead, he argues that the changes did not occur smoothly over time, nor was their one major transition point. Changes occurred during transitional periods of “involution” and “concentration.” An intermittent period where impersonal market factors coupled with personal decisions created the inertia implied by Sellers that pulled residents of western Massachusetts toward market-oriented production.⁹ Other historians, including Daniel Vickers, question rural residents’ ideology and argue that early Americans transitioned to capitalism by using “a mode of production geared to considerations of use *and* sale.”¹⁰ This important article pushes historians to reexamine the ways that people *thought* about and *understood* the choices they were making when participating in market activities. Instead of examining the specific economic aspects of individual choices—which are difficult because of a dearth of sources—historians have begun to look at how Americans shifted their mindsets to account for the change in action. Thus, studying the “transition” to capitalism emerged as the best way to understand how American society dealt with the momentous changes in the social and economic fabric of the early nineteenth century.

The most recent historiographical works continue to examine the transition to capitalism in this fashion. Contemporary historians are focused on examining the system of values held by early Americans in their quest for economic security as a way to understand why they made their economic choices. Martin Brueghel’s excellent study of the Hudson River Valley focuses on finding the moment when the capitalist “mindset”

⁹ Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990): 15.

¹⁰ Daniel Vickers, “Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 47 (1990): 6.

emerged. For him, capitalism emerged when “commercial transactions had moved from a physical setting to an abstract, intangible sphere where prices mattered more than people and relationships.”¹¹ Other historians such as Sven Beckert examine corporate leaders in New York City to understand how and why they began establishing relatively large, complex economic organizations that necessitated large bureaucracies to manage. These historians are concerned more with understanding the quotidian transformations of the “transition to capitalism” rather than the revolutionary forces that altered everyday lives.¹²

This new historiographical trend spurred by Clark and Vickers continued to prevail through the period of economic turmoil of the so-called “Great Recession,” which spawned renewed interest in the economic changes of the antebellum era, birthing a “New History of Capitalism.” Seth Rockman has recently explained that this movement “integrates a variety of subfields and methodologies under one capacious heading. If nothing else, the study of capitalism has woven together business history, labor history, economic history, political economy, and the history of economic thought [and] has sought to revitalize subfields that...have fallen out of favor in the profession.”¹³ Combining these subfields is designed to examine capitalism in innovative ways. One major facet of the new history of capitalism is the focus on understanding the grass roots evidence of social change instead of looking for an indication of a broad theory in play in

¹¹ Martin Bruegel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780–1860*. Durham (NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 2.

¹² Sven Beckert, *Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

¹³ Seth Rockman, “What makes the history of capitalism newsworthy?” *Journal of the Early Republic* 34 (2014): 439-466.

a given study. By applying this new perspective, these historians are now examining what society can tell us about capitalism rather than what capitalism can tell us about society. The recalibration of focus comes from a deep sense of discontent with older studies of capitalism that obsess over the definitions and timing of the emergence of modern capitalism in the United States. For decades, historians debated the characteristics of the economic system but emerged with little to show for it other than that certain models emerged in certain areas of the United States during the early nineteenth century. Instead, by examining what society can tell us about capitalism, new research allows historians to connect the *long history* of capitalism into an interpretive framework that explains the relationship between increasingly entangled systems of modern economics. Rather than understanding how capitalism took over the United States, historians are now using economic lenses of analysis like comparative advantage to understand the complex interplay of resources, inventions, infrastructure and individual choice upon the alterations of economic patterns.

While there are significant problems with the theoretical underpinnings of the New History of Capitalism, this dissertation contributes to this new body of work by examining the development of the capitalist mindset in a western city, far away from viable river ways and ports.¹⁴ Indianapolis, Indiana, experienced a different evolution

¹⁴ The most glaring issue regarding the theoretical framework of the New History of Capitalism is that it assumes that capitalism has always existed. These historians, and especially Rockman, argue that we should understand capital movements and market activity to comprehend society. Under this assumption, capitalism existed from the moment that beings began trading with each other. Ancient Persia, Medieval Europe, and Han China would operate under the same economic umbrella as contemporary New York City. Understanding the economic history of the world is a fine goal but does not address the significant changes created by long-distance credit markets or investment practices that are the defining hallmarks of modern capitalism. It would be wiser to call this new approach the “New Economic History” to alleviate the problems of the term “capitalism.”

than the eastern outposts and river towns that have attracted the attention of so many scholars of the market revolution. One of the most important books on the topic, Paul Johnson's *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, focused on how social relationships were challenged and remolded during the transition to capitalism.¹⁵ He argues that the economic changes of the early nineteenth century—accelerated by the introduction of the Erie Canal—caused a social restructuring of the city as employers separated their homes from their shops. The resulting loss of social control by owners provoked a perceived breakdown in the moral order of the community and forced owners to adopt new forms of social control. For Johnson, the Second Great Awakening was an indispensable tool for obtaining workers who would accept the new forms of labor and respectability. Studying religious and labor practices as well as community interaction allowed Johnson to examine the ways that social relations were recreated in an era of profound change.

In the 1820s and 1830s, then, Rochester and its people were remade as capitalism took hold. Though the particulars differ from study to study, this is the transition to capitalism on which much of the historiography has centered. But how did this transition play out in the Early West? The best work on inland western cities remains John Mack Faragher's *Sugar Creek*. His excellent research on central Illinois describes development in the "western" frontier up to the Civil War and examines many aspects of social life away from major waterways including conflicts over development. But Faragher's work dates itself by noting that farmers "still committed to self-sufficiency" during the 1840s.¹⁶

¹⁵ Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

¹⁶ John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986): 178. The work still has incredible value as a community study and should be a first consultation of any student of Midwestern development.

Historians have since done away with the concept of self-sufficiency and argued that they cooperated and participated in markets from the moment of earliest settlement.¹⁷ Frontier residents rarely, if ever, relied solely on their own skills and those of their families. As shown through the works of Richard Bushman, Winifried Rothenberg, Daniel Vickers, Christopher Clark and others, complex trade and support networks existed that allowed frontier farmers to create an early economy buttressed by social bonds. As a result, historians must re-examine older explanations of the transition to capitalism during pioneer settlement in the west to understand the character of nineteenth-century American expansion and development in the region that, in the 1800s, was the source of hope for the future of America's republican spirit.¹⁸

This study of Indianapolis and the surrounding Marion County, Indiana, seeks to understand how this transition played out in a western, land-locked city. It is inspired by work by esteemed scholars like Paul Johnson and Christopher Clark and newer scholarship by historians like Sven Beckert, Seth Rockman, and Brian Luskey. Given its location on America's frontier in 1825, it owes a debt, too, to Frederick Jackson Turner whose "frontier thesis" has long spurred debate over the process of American development. For Turner, the presence of the frontier and "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward

¹⁷ For a discussion of how the concept of "self-sufficiency" has outlasted its usefulness, see Richard Bushman, "Markets and Composite Farms in Early America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55 (1998): 351-374.

¹⁸ One of the best books on how early Americans envisioned western development is seen in Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

explain American development.”¹⁹ He believed that understanding American identity required examination of the process of conquering “savagery” that altered cultural patterns as frontier settlers adapted to new environments in their travels across the east coast over the Appalachians, through the Midwest, across the Great Plains, over the Rockies and down the western slope to the Pacific. For Turner, “American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line...American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier.”²⁰

Turner’s thesis shaped the discourse of American history for decades and John Mack Faragher proclaims that “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” is “the single most influential piece of writing in the history of American History.”²¹ Some writers of western history argue that the frontier thesis is so pervasive that it paralyzes a deeper understanding of the meaning of the West in America by obfuscating the “unbroken past” that links the Old West to contemporary society. For these historians, western history is victimized by Turner’s assertion that the West as “frontier” closed in 1890 and, thus, limits our memory of the West to boomtowns, prostitutes, high-noon showdowns, cattle drives and rustlers. As a result, contemporary western history shuns the concept of Turner’s frontier. One historian has argued that this trend occurred because Turner’s disciples defended his thesis so strictly during the mid-20th century.

¹⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” and other Essays*, ed. John Mack Faragher. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 31.

²⁰ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” and other Essays*, ed. John Mack Faragher. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 32.

²¹ John Mack Faragher, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” and other Essays*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994): 1.

When the New Left social history of the 1960s so emphatically showed the lack of uniformity in social development, contemporary historiography of the American West pivoted toward Walter Prescott Webb's interpretational lens of the West as a "place" as a way to get past the intellectual obstructionism of Turner's followers. Webb's method focused on the specific difficulties that settlers experienced on the Great Plains and argued that they caused a revolutionary break that Turner underemphasized. For Webb, the arid, treeless, flat Plains region forced settlers to abandon most things they knew about North American settlement. They needed to create completely new agricultural, economic and social institutions to survive in a region that was so drastically different from the well-watered eastern portion of the continent. The theoretical framework of Webb's West was attractive to historians looking for a unifying theory for their studies. Instead of analyzing how social processes evolved over time and space from east to west, historians began limiting their research to one geographical area and rejecting the idea of a single "process" of development that could tie the history of the nation together.

Contemporary western historians focus on the "unbroken past" of the West to distance themselves from Turner's assertion that the frontier closed in 1890, but this research is overwhelmingly limited to areas west of the Mississippi River. The current methodology—while useful in creating temporal continuity of a region—limits the geographical scope of western history. It ignores the temporal nature of borderlands in places like Appalachia or the Midwest—regions that were once as far removed from the majority of American economic activity as the Far West was in the 1880s.²² This dissertation aims to revive particular components of the Turner thesis in order to

²² The major argument of this school is seen in Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton Press, 1987): 18-30.

reconnect the “many Wests” of the American continent abroad so that we can again search for meaning in expansion throughout a world increasingly connected by better transportation and communication infrastructure.

New western historians are correct to label Turner’s “frontier thesis” as sexist or Euro-centric by contemporary standards. They are also correct in criticizing Turner’s model, arguing that his description of a standardized process of development was too simple. No two historical processes are exactly the same and not even a brilliant mind like Turner’s could account for the different progressions that took place across space and time. However, critics go too far when arguing that studying the “process” of settling the West is irrelevant. The settlement of the United States *did* occur as a process that generally moved from east to west.²³ Environmental barriers to settlement *did* exist. They forced people to overwhelmingly choose to cross the Appalachians through the Cumberland Gap during the late eighteenth century. They obliged travelers to sail around South America rather than cross the Great Plains to get to California. They overwhelmingly required people to remain near major waterways when settling a new region during the early nineteenth century. While this work is not environmentally deterministic, it argues that historians would be remiss to ignore the interconnection of environmental barriers and technological limitations that affected patterns of settlement, growth, and development in the United States that were repeated over and over, and are still repeated today. It applies those same analytical aspects to other areas of the United

²³ At least the settlement east of the Rocky Mountains, as mentioned in the following sentence. The settlement of California does portray a different scenario than the one presented by Turner but presents the opportunity to offer a neo-Turnerian comparative perspective. Understanding the west to east settlement of the West Coast may offer fruitful observations and counterpoints—as well as confirmation—of any ideas posited east of the Rockies.

States in order to understand how western development *did* occur as a process that was very much affected by the technological ability to get to different places.

This dissertation seeks to reclaim the useful parts of Turner's thesis and apply them toward our understanding of western development. This "Neo-Turnerian" perspective jettisons the argument that the frontier made Americans special. Instead, it combines the approaches of Turner and Webb to examine how the place affected the process of development the same way an environmental historian observes development. The legacy of Turner—one of the first environmental historians—emerges when using a comparative lens to draw conclusions about how the environment hampers or buttresses development of common institutions during a given period.²⁴ The process of development is measured in this work as the emergence of key social institutions or economic markers. For instance, the frontier existed in Marion County far after it faded in rural Massachusetts. Things like wage labor, established banking houses, and the ability to acquire industrially made goods all existed in the Northeast long before they occurred in Marion County, but their developments caused similar consequences.

The definition of place used here is equally important but more inclusive than Webb's interpretation. A Neo-Turnerian perspective on western history must necessarily examine the specific characteristics of place and account for its unique features. Historians must move spatially away from understanding the "West" as a place west of the Mississippi River in order to understand broader commonalities. By examining how social, economic, political, religious, environmental, or other structures emerge in

²⁴ Historians must be careful to judge "common institutions." This dissertation studies the mid-nineteenth century, so judging when automobiles became everyday items would be useless. Only by individual assessment of what represents a "common institution" can this type of research be done.

different locations over time, historians will be able to understand how place and process interconnect to describe American development, the American West and a wider history of frontier regions around the world. The purpose, then, of seeking these processes of development are markers of frontier recession that historians can use to understand common themes between time and place. Reflecting the spirit of the New History of Capitalism, this Neo-Turnerian perspective does not ask what the traditional definitions of the West can tell us about America. Instead, it asks what American development can tell us about how we understand the West and frontiers. This approach allows historians to draw new conclusions about frontier development and make comparative interpretations regarding development in modernizing regions across time, space and place.

The same way that the New History of Capitalism is not really “new,” comparing frontiers and borderlands is not a completely original concept. Earl Pomeroy, Walter Nugent and William Cronon have all considered how to compare frontiers and borderlands. Nugent, specifically, compared the American West to other regions in the world that experienced similar patterns of development. He has noted that the frontier “process” in the United States is remarkably similar to Third World Development in Latin America or to change in the Australian outback. For him, “they are different processes but are almost certainly related.” Understanding processes of development are crucial to drawing conclusions in comparative topics like borderlands studies. Scholars like Nugent or Walter Elofson are re-examining the value of Turner’s work and studying

comparative processes of development in order to understand broader trends in worldwide change over time.²⁵

This model can also be applied to a national level. Transnational comparative history has provided unique perspectives on worldwide developments, but comparative history at the national level can also elucidate important conclusions. This dissertation seeks to contribute to this scholarship by comparing the frontier experience of Marion County, Indiana, to other frontier regions of the United States.²⁶ It examines the transformation of central Indiana to explain how development occurred in an environment that was inaccessible because of inadequate transportation networks until the mid-nineteenth century. Those transportation barriers were so extreme that they made the one hundred miles of overland travel from Indianapolis to Cincinnati more expensive than the 1,400-mile trip from Cincinnati to New Orleans. By examining this perspective and comparing it to developments in other areas that experienced similar and dissimilar growth patterns, this dissertation will shed light on the role of the environment and transportation networks on the recession of the frontier and the development of capitalism in the United States. Rather than arguing that infrastructure *was* important for the development of capitalist institutions, it will examine *how important* those systems were in the evolution of the local economic system. Tracking the development of

²⁵ Walter Nugent, "Comparing Wests and Frontiers," in *The Oxford History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner II et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994): 804. A recent article has promoted a similar argument about comparing frontiers. See Warren Elofson, "The Universality of Frontier Disorder: Northern Australia Viewed Against the Northern Great Plains of America," *Agricultural History* 88 (2014): 147-174.

²⁶ This researcher has considered using international perspectives in future work on this topic. Particularly interesting would be a comparative discussion of Minas Gerias or Manaus, Brazil or Toowoomba, Australia.

capitalism along different frontiers will allow historians to comprehend the importance of alterations in infrastructure networks for economic development.

Comparing frontiers is a difficult task. Research interests, source bases and other specific circumstances prevent standardization of research in comparative frontier methodology. The United States, alone, is too large and diverse for a one-size-fits-all analysis. However, recent scholarship, such as the edited volume *Frontier Cities*, provides multiple perspectives on comparative frontiers and urban development. Timothy R. Mahoney's assertion that frontier cities are notoriously difficult to define is very useful to this study. He notes that most cities exist on the frontier for only a short time, and that once the city becomes a central hub, it usually loses its frontier characteristics. It ceases to be a part of the frontier altogether. He argues that frontier cities have three distinct frontier phases: the establishment of an isolated outpost, the emergence of a commercial outpost, and its development into a central hub.²⁷ This definition of frontier city works particularly well for Marion County. There are distinct periods where Marion County demonstrates characteristics of all three phases which will be explained below. In another *Frontier Cities* chapter, Elliot West argues that an additional characteristic of a frontier city in the United States is that it grew up at the same time as the transportation and communications revolution. For West, these cities could create incredibly complex infrastructures in short periods of time because they had no previous infrastructure to demolish. They could "build to suit" which had a major consequence for the trajectory of development. As West notes regarding settlement

²⁷ Timothy R. Mahoney, "Locating the Frontier City in Time and Space: Documenting a Passing Phenomenon," in *Frontier Cities: Encounters at the Crossroads of Empire*, ed. Jay Gitlin et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 153.

during the communication and transportation revolutions, “the effect...was to telescope their development” in a short period of time.²⁸ Indianapolis unquestioningly exhibited the developmental path posited by West. It was the emergence of the railroad that allowed Indianapolis to mature economically. The lack of a canal prevented a powerful anti-railroad lobby from emerging in the Indiana legislature as occurred in other states with completed canal networks. As a result, Hoosiers could quickly and efficiently build railroads to places that would allow them to maximize their profit potential. Indianapolis was born in the river era but matured with the rail. Combining the two methods of research promoted by West and Mahoney, it is clear that Indianapolis is a frontier town at least until 1847.

This dissertation will examine several features of Indianapolis development and compare them to the experience of other regions of the northern United States. Land values, ratios of improved land, and agricultural output will be important yardsticks when determining the economic frontier. Social features like the emergence of horse thief detective agencies will elucidate the limits of state power and the role that community organizations had in maintaining social order. Other factors like availability of manufactured goods will show the edge of Atlantic World-oriented economic systems. In sum, these characteristics will show that change occurred along a barrier that reflected the ability of technology to overcome environmental barricades. Far from a line that retreated from east to west, the economic frontier receded the moment when transportation technology allowed settlers to master the environment and efficiently

²⁸ Elliot West, “Grain Kings, Rubber Dreams, and Stock Exchanges: How Transportation and Communication Changed Frontier Cities,” in *Frontier Cities: Encounters at the Crossroads of Empire*, ed. Jay Gitlin et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) 113.

participate in a complex market economy. After that point, local decisions like cultural preferences, social patterns and external market forces emerged as the driving factors of development. Marion County, as a case study, will show that the transition to capitalism did not occur uniformly across the United States at one time.²⁹ Large-scale factors determined the moment when Americans of each particular area could enter larger markets and local factors determined what they did afterward.

The brief history of Marion County before the Civil War shows the profound effect that Elliot West's "telescoped changes" had on local residents. This dissertation relies heavily on the New Rural History to measure these changes. The New Rural History, mirroring the change in the New Left History of the 1960s, began focusing on the social aspects of rural society in the 1980s. Instead of resting on agricultural output—on which this dissertation also relies—to explain rural society, New Rural Historians began working toward understanding the daily rhythms of life and asking how agricultural output changes reflected individual, family, or community values. This approach is useful for studying western settings during the antebellum period. In 1800, the vast majority of Americans lived in rural areas. By 1860, when cities began to take a central role in American life, rural people still made up 80 percent of the nation's population. Agriculture also dominated the early national economy. Local, state and national governments all used their power to construct transportation networks to increase the profitability of sending agricultural surplus to markets. Merchants in the

²⁹ This argument is often discussed when examining the coastal North and South in debates regarding the nature of the southern economy. Often overlooked by those promoting that the South was pre-capitalist is that they were very reliant on a world-wide economy that tied them together, and also that they were deeply connected to Atlantic World trade unlike places like Marion County, who were relatively innocuous participants in the market economy.

early republic dealt overwhelmingly in agricultural products and farmers consumed most of the imported goods of the nation. As one historian put it, “agriculture made the whole economy go” in the early national and antebellum periods.³⁰ Rural society, then, is a better indicator of the hearts and minds of the vast majority of antebellum Americans. By understanding rural society during this period, historians avoid teleological traps that focus too much on the urban world we live in instead of the rural world that historical agents experienced.

The process of change occurred relatively quickly in Indianapolis. The city’s transformation from backwater to central transportation hub demonstrates the type of telescoped development described by Elliot West. Viewing Marion County through this lens shows that the city not only demonstrates its value to scholars of the new history of capitalism but is also a significant city for western historians understanding the differences from eastern urban areas from those in the West. Indianapolis was designed as an eastern city, but the environmental and transportation barriers to city commerce—along with the economic devastation caused by the Panic of 1837—forced it to develop using western-style urban planning and transportation styles.

In order to show the profoundly Turnerian process of change, Chapter One will describe the society and economy of Marion County during the earliest years of settlement to establish a baseline of activity for the region arguing that the city was a woodland wilderness that prevented citizens from easily participating in any practical national market activity. The site was chosen as the seat of the state capital in 1820. The environment, however, did not allow settlers to achieve the aims they thought befitted

³⁰ David Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 69.

their new city. In 1825, when the capital was finally moved to the new site, the environment still limited any potential access to outside markets. Chapter Two describes the early efforts of residents to establish their city and create basic transportation networks. Using Marion County Commissioner's Office Records, election records, and newspaper articles, this chapter will show that Hoosiers provided almost no dissent to the construction of an economic hub that would supply residents with access to cheaper and better goods. Chapter Three examines how Hoosiers handled the possible success of internal improvements. It notes the development of Marion County in terms of establishing an Agricultural Society and the increased use of watches and clocks to regulate their society in expectation of national market connections. However, in their quest for economic success, they ignored the dangers of linking into the national economy. Newspapers, secondary sources, and a close reading of the *Diary of Calvin Fletcher* will show that their whole-hearted support of internal improvements led directly to the difficulty of the region after investing heavily in failed internal improvements caused by the Panic of 1837.³¹ Fletcher's diary provides a look at the mindset of Marion County residents and probate records show the economic calamity that Hoosiers experienced. Both sources suggest a profound sense of shock and anger at the situation in which residents found themselves.

Chapter Four describes the effect of the Panic of 1837 on Marion County. Sheriff's sale records, newspaper advertisements, and probates show the economic devastation depressed prices, wiped out family savings and prevented Hoosiers from

³¹ Calvin Fletcher's diary is widely considered the best source on pre-Civil War Indianapolis. Fletcher was a prominent farmer, lawyer and civic leader in the city and produced a nine-volume diary that provides an array of details of the city from weather and crop yields to the processes of economic decision making in times of crisis.

achieving their goals of economic relevance. It also describes the steps taken by the state to escape its debts as a way to continue its quest to improve its transportation infrastructure. Chapter Five uses agricultural census data to create a baseline of agricultural information to demonstrate the telescoped development of Marion County. It will discuss the recovery of Indianapolis during the 1840s and how Hoosiers viewed the economic tragedy they had just witnessed. It will also discuss the beginning of the railroad era of Marion County from 1847 through 1852. In 1847, the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad directly connected the city with the Ohio River. The arrival of the railroad was widely regarded as a magnificent success for the city, but the unforeseen externalities were less well received. Hoosiers were confronted with challenges to the perceived social order by German, Irish and African-American laborers as well as undesirables like horse thieves who threatened the economic well-being of family units. The chapter will examine how Hoosiers reacted to the increasingly tumultuous social atmosphere that rapidly descended on the region. Chapter Six will examine the city from the mid-1850s through the eve of the Civil War. It examines agricultural census data to show the telescoped nature of development caused by the arrival of the railroad and examines the social developments mentioned above. It also shows how prices for agricultural land and goods caught up to market rates, which is the strongest marker of regional economic stabilization. It will also examine the creation of formal social institutions like police departments and civic organizations to show the regression of frontier characteristics seen in the early chapters of this work. Chapter Seven will discuss the role of Indiana in the Civil War Era. After the railroad connected Indianapolis to the rest of the market economy, the city and the state took a distinctly northern pattern of

development and accepted the Free Labor argument of the fledgling Republican Party. The lack of slavery in the state allied it with the Union during the war which fostered a new set of problems unrealized in the earliest years of settlement. Instead of environmental limits to market participation, by 1861, Hoosiers were prevented from participating in a free market by the United States government embargo that outlawed trade with southern states. Hoosiers enjoyed unparalleled access to eastern markets and opportunities to feed the Union Army which increased their economic success; however, they were forced to deal with the military policies of Governor Oliver Morton, an ardent Union supporter, who volunteered Indianapolis as a major military hub and prisoner of war camp, and made it a target of rebel invaders. Soldiers, rarely known as pleasant house guests, were forced on Hoosier residents and caused social tensions among residents. By the time the war ended, Hoosiers were so embroiled in national economics and politics that they had fully surrendered the individual independence they craved as the region was settled a half-century earlier.

The story of Indianapolis is critical for understanding the antebellum United States for many reasons. Its location in the Early West allows historians of the new history of capitalism to get away from the commonly studied northeastern United States. Historians of this budding field will be able to gain valuable comparative insights into the relationship between the vast regions that participated in the Atlantic World economy. The city is also not located on a navigable river. The focus gets away from the few studies on Ohio River cities such as Cincinnati done by Daniel Aaron and Walter Glazer, and applies the principles of infrastructure improvement put forth by George Rogers Taylor and Daniel Walker Howe in a region that can offer new insights into old

questions, including whether or not Americans promoted capitalist forms of development throughout their history.³² A third, related point, is that the city is one of the first to emerge nearly out of nowhere to become the state capital. The unpopulated site was chosen due to its environmental and geographic location in the center of the state. This unique setting provides a site from which to study the locus of settlement, infrastructure improvement and the transition to capitalism in a way that few other cities in the United States could. The lessons of the transition to capitalism will be unique in their own way, but the advantage to studying this historically specific site lies in its ability to compare developments of a city that is relatively *tabula rasa* to those along the Hudson River, or in other well-researched locations. Understanding the various factors that caused the specific history of early Marion County gives us insight into the development of the Early West. More important, understanding how the development of this region compares to places across time and space will allow us to recreate a broader narrative of development that give meaning to our collective experience in a world that is increasingly interdependent.

³² Daniel Aron, *Cincinnati: Queen City of the West* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992); Walter Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840: The Social and Functional Organization of an Urban Community during the Pre-Civil War Period* (Ohio State University, 1999); George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution: 1815-1860* (New York: Rinehart, 1951); Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

CHAPTER 2: “THERE WERE NO ROADS: TRANSPORTATION, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY IN MARION COUNTY, 1819-1828”

In 1821, the hot, humid summer and swampy conditions in Marion County, Indiana, fostered the birth of millions of mosquitoes. The malarial pests swarmed the few white settlers who had just recently moved to the newly selected site of the Indiana state capital at the confluence of Fall Creek and the West Fork of the White River. Unsurprisingly, the epidemic overwhelmed the two resident frontier doctors who were ill-supplied with the necessary knowledge or provisions to handle such ailments. By the time fall temperatures killed off the mosquitoes, one in eight settlers were dead, as were the hopes of promoting Indianapolis as a “healthy land.” The memory of the “great chill” prompted one resident to recall a half-century later that the city suffered from the “ill repute of the universal prostration of 1821” and caused potential settlers to avoid the region.³³ The threat to settlement did not end with malaria. Hostile Native Americans also threatened the lives of local residents. George Pogue, one of the first permanent settlers to the region, went into the woods around his cabin looking for lost—or perhaps stolen—horses and never returned giving rise to the local legend that he was murdered by Native Americans.³⁴ Natural wildlife also consternated pioneers in their quest to construct settlements. In 1823, Marion County suffered a gray squirrel infestation that

³³ Jeffrey Tenuth, *Indianapolis: A Circle City History* (Charleston: Arcadia Press, 2004), 29-30; William Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870), 21; for a discussion of how settlers thought of mosquitoes and disease see, Conevery Bolton Valencias, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Perseus Books, 2002), 79-82.

³⁴ David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1120.

destroyed the corn crop. Calvin Fletcher, an early resident and young Indiana lawyer, noted in his diary that there were so many rodents that “one man killed round one corn field 248 in 3 days.”³⁵ The settlers of Jamestown wouldn’t have wished the Marion County experience on their worst enemies.

The struggles of early settlers in Marion County represent one of the most slow, difficult, and ever-present problems of development in the Old Northwest.³⁶ The difficulties emerged from the foundation of the county which was created by politicians looking to satisfy the disparate constituencies of the Whitewater, Ohio, and Wabash River valleys in the east, south, and west sides of the state. Officials looked for a central setting for the new capital to assuage accusations of favoritism and, in 1820, the commissioners to the legislature noted that the new location was chosen to “connect with an eligible site the advantages of a navigable stream and fertility of soil [and] they have not been unmindful of the geographical portions of the various portions of the state.”³⁷ In 1833, Hugh McCulloch, future Secretary of the Treasury, stated flatly that “Indianapolis...had been selected for the capital, not because there was anything attractive in the situation, but because it was near the geographical center of the State.”³⁸ The quest for centrality, water transportation and fertile soil drew the commissioners to a site in the central, as yet unsettled, portion of Indiana. Balancing the needs of the states’

³⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, comp., *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 88.

³⁶ By frontier, I mean the outskirts of Euro-American cultural, economic and social hegemony. This profoundly Turnerian definition does not suggest cultural superiority as some critics have argued. Instead, it promotes the idea that residents of this region were in a borderland where they were forced to re-evaluate the patterns of daily life, especially regarding market orientation.

³⁷ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 7.

³⁸ Shirley McCord, *Travel Accounts of Indiana, 1679-1961* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1970), 142.

constituents, the capital was laid onto a landscape that could not immediately meet the needs of a political center. Indianapolis—as the site was later named—was a place where few Europeans had ever set foot before 1820. While compromise obtained a central location for the capital and prevented immediate political conflict in the young state, the issue of transportation emerged as the primary problem of residents during the first generation of settlement. Surveyors overestimated the value of the White River as a transportation system for getting goods to and from the new city.³⁹ Unlike residents of river towns such as Cincinnati or Albany, port towns such as New York City, Philadelphia or New Orleans, or those with easy road access to major town centers in the 1820s, settlers of Marion County were forced to deal with the lack of an economically efficient connection to established markets. These settlers moved to an area where the process of building a specialized, complex, connected economy and society was in the distant future.

The issue of transportation is an important one for this dissertation. Settling Marion County—and all along the American frontier—recalibrated the experience of time and space for many settlers. For some Americans, it meant elongating the period that allowed individuals to obtain land and pass it down to their children before population pressures forced the emergence of wage labor. Jeffersonians—echoing Scottish Enlightenment thinkers like David Hume—labeled this the “agricultural” phase of civilization.⁴⁰ Marion County settlers were able to obtain cheap land on the frontier

³⁹ George Cottman, “River Navigation in Indiana” *The Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History* 2 (1906): 89-95.

⁴⁰ An excellent, brief overview of this strain of thought in the Early Republic is seen in Tamara Thorton Plakins, *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life Among the Boston Elite, 1785-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 2-9. For another brief discussion of the “four stages theory” see,

that allowed them to escape the rising cost of farms in longer-settled areas like the valley towns of western Massachusetts.⁴¹ Other settlers experienced a more profound change. Men like James B. Ray or Calvin Fletcher experienced less developed Euro-American settlement as they moved from longer-settled areas such as Cincinnati or Connecticut to the relative wilderness of Marion County.⁴² If the process of development is defined as an increase in economic specialization to meet family needs, these settlers found themselves moving backward in time. Instead of gaining the advantages of markets that were emerging in eastern towns and cities, emigration to Marion County forced—or allowed, depending on one’s perspective—settlers to revert back to the small, independent “composite farms” of the pre-industrial age where families produced a significant portion of their own goods and were not reliant on burgeoning regional, national or international markets for their living.⁴³

Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 17-20.

⁴¹ There is a large historiography on this topic. For a brief introduction, see David Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 76-80. For more specific examples, see Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 60-61; Kenneth L. Lockridge, “Land, Population, and the Evolution of New England Society, 1630-1790,” *Past and Present* 39 (1968): 62-80.

⁴² Of course, these terms are extremely loaded. This dissertation does not assume that there was only one, single track of development. Stephen Aron’s *How the West Was Lost* tackles the subject of the myriad paths of development in the trans-Appalachian West. This dissertation, instead, examines how the linear path of development of one area was obstructed by certain environmental, social and technological realities. It does not attempt to examine the “lost opportunities” of residents of Marion County. See Stephen Aron, *How the West was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁴³ For a fuller definition of “composite farm,” see Richard Bushman, “Markets and Composite Farms in Early in America,” in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 351-374. One excellent description of the transformations in the eastern United States see, James L. Huston, “Economic Change and Political Realignment in Antebellum Pennsylvania,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 113 (1989): 347-395. The changes described in Pennsylvania reflect similar patterns in Indiana society that occurred in later decades.

These composite farms used pre-capitalist modes of production to provide a competency for families. Families produced most of what they needed for survival and sold any excess to neighbors or to merchants in exchange for imported goods. Market capitalism—by contrast—is often characterized by three features: a desire to accumulate capital for further investment, the heavy influence of markets on economic activity, and the rise of “free” wage labor based on the job market.⁴⁴ At the time of settlement in Marion County, these characteristics were emerging in major urban centers throughout the northeastern United States. Workmen’s parades, improved transportation networks that fostered standardized prices across community boundaries, and a spirit of investment permeated the northeastern United States. These changes showed an increasing transition to capitalist structures in many parts of daily life.⁴⁵

Hoosiers were too secluded by environmental barriers to integrate into national agricultural markets as much as places like Cincinnati, New Orleans or Albany, and the availability of unoccupied land parcels prevented the rise of a mature system of wage labor. As working class artisans began to feel the pinch of what a specialized economy could do to individuals in New York City, Baltimore, Boston or Philadelphia, Marion

⁴⁴ Christopher Clark, “Rural America and the Transition to Capitalism,” in *Journal of the Early Republic*, 16 (1996): 224. See also, Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁴⁵ The literature on these transitions is voluminous. An excellent starting point is Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Other broad interpretations of 19th century change include Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (New York: Little & Brown, 1946); Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005). New York City workingmen’s parades and their displeasure with the emergence of wage labor is covered in Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). The effect of markets on determining economic activity has been discussed heavily. For an overview of the debate, see Allan Kulikoff, “The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America,” in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 46 (1989): 120-144.

County families remained far more reliant on their own hard work for family success. Owners, managers and markets held almost no power over frontier composite farmers. The only factor of modern capitalism that was noticeable in Marion County from the time of settlement was the desire to invest in infrastructure that would allow residents to partake in market interaction. However, these occurred within a state-wide atmosphere and are not the clearest markers of local mindsets. Not until the 1830s did local Hoosiers begin investing as speculators in fire insurance or canal companies. The 1820s were a period of searching for residents of Marion County as they examined the various options available to them to achieve their quest for family success.

This chapter argues that the unique and challenging local environment of central Indiana forced Hoosiers to revert back to pre-capitalist economic strategies. To demonstrate that the chronological process of development in Marion County was affected by its geographical place, it first gives a brief geographical history of central Indiana and describes why the region was settled later than other portions of the state. The second part discusses the transportation problems during the first decade of settlement including poor road conditions and the difficulty of river navigation to show what Hoosiers were worried about and provide insight into what they hoped to accomplish in the future by building their city. The transportation hardships forced early settlers to adopt a pre-capitalist focus in the local economy during the first decade of settlement. We can construct the everyday life of Hoosiers during this era by looking at different styles of newspaper advertisements, diaries and travel accounts, and what they suggest about daily life in early Marion County. The final section examines the social construction of the region and argues that central Indiana was settled by a cross-section of

Americans from the Northeast and Upland South. These settlement patterns demonstrate that no single cultural pattern can explain the developmental strategy of the city, which makes it an ideal setting to examine how western cities chose to develop during a period of rapid economic and technological change. Most significantly, this chapter sets a baseline of development. The Hoosier capital quickly transformed during the antebellum era from a relative backwater to a major Union staging point during the Civil War that bypassed its frontier days and was fully integrated into the national economy. Examining the early foundations of Marion County gives insight into the patterns of development that defined Indianapolis during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The earliest struggles of settlement in Marion County were caused by the environment. Most of the modern geographical features of central Indiana were created during the most recent ice age as shallow seas retreated and glaciers smoothed the land, deposited till and outwash and created riverbeds. Most recently, the Wisconsin Glacier covered the northern two-thirds of the state, giving it the flattened landscape the region is known for. The central third of the state, called the Tipton Till Plain, holds 10,000 square miles of fertile soil that include several end moraines along the eastern and western edges of the state that mark the furthest extent of the glaciers. The Greenwood Moraine south of downtown Indianapolis marks the southernmost terminus of the Wisconsin glacier. The regression of the Wisconsin Glacier from central Indiana and the subsequent melt created the pro-glacial lake system in what are now the Great Lakes. In Indiana, the drainage of Lake Maumee created the Wabash River Valley and its system of tributaries that funneled water through the northern part of the state.⁴⁶ The direction of glacial

⁴⁶ Lake Maumee was the larger precursor to Lake Erie.

outwash and the specific features of Central Indiana left Marion County, for all intents and purposes, landlocked by natural geologic processes that fostered the shallow, southwestwardly flowing White River as the only aquatic route to the larger river systems of North America.⁴⁷

The fertile, flat soil of Central Indiana left behind by the glaciers played an important part in prehistoric settlement. The woodland period, around 1000 BCE, saw the emergence of societies who used ceramic vessels and showed increased signs of sedentary settlement. Burial mounds, such as those found in southeastern Ohio and southern Indiana, and evidence of long-distance trade suggest that the prehistoric people of the Tipton Till Plain had relatively complex economies and trading patterns that the fertile soil supported. The Mississippian period signified the height of prehistoric population density in Central Indiana with intense slash-and-burn maize agriculture, fishing, and hunting. Native Americans including the Delaware, Miami and Shawnee tribes all lived in the Tipton Till Plain during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and traded the abundant animal pelts with French fur trappers. These Native American tribes valued the land for the same reason that settlers did—it provided them with enough crops to obtain a competency. As Hoosiers sought to expand into the interior of the state, they needed to remove Natives from the region. The decline of the Tecumseh-led Native confederation after the Battle of Tippecanoe forced Natives to sell the land of Central

⁴⁷ Jeffrey Tenuth, *Indianapolis: A Circle City History* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 11-20. For an in-depth analysis of the geographical foundations of Central Indiana see the Indiana Geographical Survey website through Indiana University. They no longer publish hard copies of papers, instead relying solely on digital storage. For Marion County specifically, see, Anthony Fleming and Robin Rupp, "Glacial Geology," <http://igs.indiana.edu/MarionCounty/GlacialGeology.cfm>, accessed 8/13/2013.

Indiana to white settlers in the Treaty of St. Mary's in 1818 and cleared land for white settlement.⁴⁸

Although the newly-opened, fertile soil certainly presented opportunities to potential European settlers in Marion County, it also presented significant obstacles. Most important, rivers were not effective modes of transportation. The White River Valley that formed from the frequent surges and contractions of the Wisconsin Glacier during the last Ice Age resulted in distinctive features within relatively short stretches along the river. High stone bluffs and shallow earthen walls exist just a few miles apart. While providing beautiful scenery and extremely fertile soil, the remnants of glacial formation kept the bed of the White River shallow and swampy.⁴⁹ The resulting drainage basins formed natural, although shallow, connections with the Mississippi River watershed. The Wisconsin Glacier formed the Wabash River Valley to the north of the White River Valley and the Ohio River Valley existed to the south. Thus, a vast majority of the state's water flowed around the White River Valley, leaving flat land and shallow riverbeds. As distinguished Indiana historian Donald F. Carmony has noted, "until east-west railroads crossed this mountain barrier in the 1850s, the Ohio-Mississippi waterway was Indiana's [and Indianapolis's] most important artery for trade."⁵⁰ The orientation of the river also caused hardship. The White River flows in a southwesterly direction and connects with the Wabash River just south of Vincennes before connecting with the Ohio

⁴⁸ Andrew Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1996), 263.

⁴⁹ A brief history of the environment and Native Americans in the region exists in Jeffry Tenuth, *Indianapolis: A Circle City History* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 11-20; for a short discussion of Native American use of land in Southern Indiana is seen in Richard Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics and Religion: 1810-1870* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 11-13.

⁵⁰ Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 47.

downriver of Evansville. The West Fork of the White River was less attractive to early settlers because it was shallower than the Wabash and further away from the Ohio than the eastern fork of the river, which was closer to the community structures of the longer-settled in the southern portion of the state. Thus, any settlers going to Marion County before the National Road or railroad arrived were forced to go against the current of river travel to a region that was incredibly secluded by environmental barriers and a dearth of efficient transportation technology.

River orientation made travel to Marion County difficult, but the region also experienced European settlement much later because of land availability along the Ohio and Wabash River Valleys. Carmony states that “most settlers lived within the area drained by the tributaries of the Mississippi [and] the preponderance of imports and exports were conveyed on this river system.”⁵¹ The Ohio-Mississippi river system cited by Carmony was certainly the most important artery of trade. The settlement of Marion County, even as a part of the system, was more difficult because it was at the farthest and shallowest edge of the tributary system. It was significantly more rational to choose a farm site further down river or on another tributary than to move all the way up to central Indiana.

Transportation technology during the early nineteenth century provided a related barrier to settlement of central Indiana. Steam power was still a relatively new enterprise when Indiana became a state and the cumbersome engines were only practical in deep water.⁵² The shallow rivers of central Indiana were a disaster for boat traffic when

⁵¹ Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 140.

⁵² The best book on steamboats in the Mississippi River system is Louis Hunter, *Steamboats on Western Rivers: An Economic and Technological History* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1994).

compared to the deep waters of the Ohio or Wabash. The shallow, obstructed rivers of central Indiana were not useful to the emergent technology of the period. Steam power was excellent for the Ohio or lower Wabash, but smaller rivers remained as secluded as ever.⁵³ The site of the territorial capital, at Vincennes, and the first state capital, at Corydon, both suggest the importance of river trade. The basic geographical and technological boundaries of the time kept the population in the southern river valleys and made Marion County relatively inaccessible, even by nineteenth century standards.

Early settlers of the Old Northwest also avoided Marion County because they sought out geographic features that were absent in central Indiana. They immediately appropriated lands that provided as few obstacles as possible to river trade. Henry Clay, commenting about opportunities for trade upon seeing the Ohio River, proclaimed he had never seen a “section for which God had done much and man so little.”⁵⁴ The deep river valleys were excellent for early settlers because it saved labor during travel. Other land settlement opportunities along the Wabash, Ohio, or Whitewater Rivers—the “crescent of settlement”—were still available and made land away from major rivers less attractive to potential settlers.⁵⁵ Before the advent of the railroad, farmers focused on obtaining access to land near waterways so they could get their crops to market as efficiently as possible. The Ohio River Valley was a known quantity to these Americans. It provided them the easiest access to the major artery of trade and the increasingly economical, steam-powered transportation system emerging in the 1800s. For these settlers, rolling landscapes were ideal. They were familiar with the Upcountry South and European

⁵³ And potentially more so, as steamboats allowed settlers to push further along the coast of the Great Lakes or western rivers like the Missouri which further lessened the population density of the nation.

⁵⁴ R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1950), 411.

⁵⁵ R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1950), 26.

landscapes from whence they came and distrusted flat land. They believed that the rivers of southern Indiana would carry their crops to market through the prohibitively dense forest.⁵⁶ Southern Indiana Hoosiers had ample room to spread throughout the lower portion of the state. Without any reason to bring settlers to a specific area, settlement away from major rivers lacked density. The only impetus for change emerged from added incentives such as decreasing opportunities for land ownership along major rivers or placing the state capital in Marion County, which occurred in 1820.

The desire to move the capital of the state to a central location came from bitter intrastate rivalries. Vincennes—on the Wabash River—was the territorial capital beginning in 1800. When Indiana became a state in 1816, Hoosiers decided that Corydon—on the Ohio River near the center of the state—should be the new center of political power. Calls for a more central capital emerged as residents moved into the young state and envisioned future northward settlement. Most notably, Governor Jonathan Jennings promoted a central location to allow for easier travel to residents wherever they lived in the state. Some opposition from Corydon and other river towns emerged, but Jennings' plan ultimately won out.⁵⁷ Surveyors from nine of the ten counties were sent out to examine potential spots in the central portion of the state and placed the new capital at the confluence of the West fork of the White River and Fall Creek. When Hoosier leaders chose to move the state capital to Indianapolis in Marion County in the central plain, they were choosing an unsettled area that lacked any

⁵⁶ Richard Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics and Religion: 1810-1870* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 13-17; Rolla Hogue, "Life in Indiana, 1800-1820," *Indiana Magazine of History* 9 (1913): 84; R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1950), 27.

⁵⁷ Edward A. Leary, *Indianapolis: The Story of a City* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1971), 4-5.

transportation access heavier than foot trails carved by Native Americans and early European traders. This decision situated the state capital in an area that was fundamentally different than any other settled area of the state.

Walter Prescott Webb described the Great Plains as a natural barrier that forced settlers to transform their lifestyles because it was arid, treeless and flat.⁵⁸ Central Indiana, while possessing trees and adequate rainfall, was flat. This feature made Central Indiana one of the first regions to require a mode of transportation other than rivers, much like the arid Far West. Most cities in the Early West were founded on major transportation routes. Cincinnati and Louisville on the Ohio, Pittsburgh at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela, and Albany on the Hudson all show that inland cities were dependent on river travel. Indianapolis, by contrast, emerged as a planned city that sprouted up without adequate transportation connections, a factor that would play a significant role in its development on the frontier and shed light on the experience of other frontier towns.⁵⁹ Much like Walter Nugent suggests, frontiers share specific characteristics that historians can compare.⁶⁰ In the United States, by the time Indiana achieved statehood in 1816, country roads connected communities from Maine to Georgia, urban industrialization was burgeoning in Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York, and market-based exchange was emerging in rural communities throughout the longer settled regions of the Northeast. Even Cincinnati was beginning to see the

⁵⁸ Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Waltham, MA: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1959).

⁵⁹ The capital of Ohio, Columbus had a similar, albeit less stark, experience. For reasons to be examined later, they did not see the same struggles as Marion County residents.

⁶⁰ Walter Nugent, "Comparing Wests and Frontiers," in *The Oxford History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 803-833.

emergence of a class structure based on wage labor and property ownership.⁶¹ Central Indiana was on the outskirts of the infrastructure system of the nation in 1816. By comparing the experience of Marion County to other frontier regions in the United States and the world, historians will be able to highlight further commonalities across developing regions and place them into a broader perspective.

Marion County existed on the economic frontier, secluded from any regular market interaction. Margaret Duden notes that “Indiana...was hindered by its poor facilities for getting to market its surplus products. The only market open to Indiana was that of the South...Those countries bordering on the Ohio river were the fortunate ones, for the interior settlements were practically cut off from any market, except in the fall and spring.”⁶² Settlers always had the ability to use keel or flatboats to transport goods to and from the river during spring freshets or the occasional fall rush. As early as 1821, boats were coming up the White River from the Ohio carrying goods to feed the newly arrived settlers. That year, future resident Matthias Nowland and his partner Elisha Herndon loaded a keelboat in Frankfort, Kentucky, with all manner of staple goods including bacon, flour and whiskey and brought them to the new city. The next May, the “Eagle” came to Indianapolis bearing 15 tons of goods and the “Boxer” brought 33 tons of

⁶¹ Jonathan Prude, “Town-Factory Conflicts in Antebellum Rural Massachusetts” in, *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*, ed. Steven Hahn et al. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 83-86. The rise of industrialization in the East has a vast historiography, but for one excellent, recent discussion of infrastructure and industrialization, see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); the bibliographic essay is also exceptionally useful as a starting point for further reading; for Cincinnati and the emergence of classes, see Steven Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

⁶² Margaret Duden, “Internal Improvements in Indiana, 1818–1846” *Indiana Magazine of History* 5 (1909): 161.

merchandise to the city.⁶³ Residents of Marion County also sent goods to the Ohio River market from the earliest days. After the initial crops were produced, residents would construct flatboats from the widely available timber in the area and ship their crops to destinations on the Ohio or Mississippi River. These boats used the current as the main transportation power, but the amount of wood available also allowed residents to construct long side and steering oars to increase the speed of their descent down the White River. These boats, like others in the Old Northwest, initially carried wheat and pork to the market but soon grew to include whiskey, oats, corn and hay.⁶⁴ Calvin Fletcher, in a letter to his brother, noted that “there were some boats started from here last fall with hogs and cattle in flat bottomed boats and there are other boats about to start load with lumber.”⁶⁵ But even those were not sure transports. Fletcher stated that New Orleans flatboat trips “make many a poor widow here and leave many a mother to lament the loss of her son whose homes know them no more.”⁶⁶

Hoosiers also had trouble when trying to transport goods to or from the Ohio River. The site of the new state capital was chosen because a congressional surveying group labeled the route to the Ohio River as a “navigable stream.” Reality, however, proved that the White River was anything *but* navigable. On June 5, 1820, Tipton, describing the White River just southwest of Indianapolis, noted that “the river turns to

⁶³ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 18.

⁶⁴ Berry Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884), 14.

⁶⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 88.

⁶⁶ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 89. Fletcher is unclear about exactly why people are not returning. Presumably, the prodigal sons either left the family to make a new life elsewhere or were killed during their trip.

the west making a verry short Bend runs hard against the w shore and seems [to] be a verry difficult pass for Boats of Burthen.”⁶⁷ Two weeks later he noted a family trying to move up the White River, declaring “at 45 p 6 the Boat landed that ever was Seen at the seat of Government it was a small Ferry Flat with a canoe Tied along side boath loaded with the household goods of 2 Families mooving to the mouth of Fall Creek they came in a keel Boat as farr as they could get it up the river then unloaded the Boat and B^t [brought] up their good in the F & Canoe.”⁶⁸ This example, repeated constantly through the period, was a regular difficulty to the establishment of an efficient economic infrastructure and forced Hoosiers to debate the riskiness of growing market crops and sending them on the hazardous trip downstream. Most residents of Marion County felt more secure maintaining a composite farm and trading for the limited amount of goods their surplus would purchase at the local merchant stores.

The difficulties of Marion County residents echoed those of many other frontier communities in different times and places.⁶⁹ For settlers of Indiana’s new capital, the lack of pre-existing roads naturally caused frequent complaints.⁷⁰ Cries resonated throughout the region about the terrible conditions of roads, rivers and trails that

⁶⁷ Shirley S. McCord, *Travel Accounts of Indiana: 1679-1961* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1970), 104.

⁶⁸ Shirley S. McCord, *Travel Accounts of Indiana: 1679-1961* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1970), 106.

⁶⁹ Joan Cashin, *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 61-68; for an example of how politics and internal improvements interconnected on the central Illinois frontier, see John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 61-66; for an example of road trouble in Texas in the 1880s, see Robert McMath, Jr., “Sandy Land and Hogs in the Timber: (Agri)cultural Origins of the Farmers’ Alliance in Texas” in *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*, ed. Steven Hahn et al. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 216-217.

⁷⁰ For one early description of roads in Indiana see “George Cottman, “Internal Improvement in Indiana: No. I—The First Thoroughfares” *Indiana Magazine of History* 3 (1907): 12-20.

prevented Hoosiers from easily connecting the larger market towns of Louisville, Cincinnati, St. Louis or New Orleans. John Tipton, while surveying potential sites for the new state capital, noted the difficulty of travel by saying, “the under growth at this time mostly Prickly ash and very thick which made verry difficult for us to ride through.”⁷¹ The same journey saw a horse “cripled” in a “very Bad Swamp.”⁷² Jeff Bremer argues that rivers were the way for frontier communities to forge economic ties to the rest of the nation. Marion County residents, however, found no solace in selling their timber to passing steamboats or selling fish to inland residents. Instead, they faced economic hardships that prevented them from establishing a strong economy until they could connect to exterior markets.⁷³

Another early difficulty lay in cutting paths to the city. In 1822, the state paid for a road from Vincennes to Indianapolis. The trail, “was marked out by dragging a log, or brush...with an ox team over the entire distance of 120 miles, through the woods, prairies and marshes. The thick, high grass on the prairies and the wild pea vines in the woods so obstructed progress that the dragging of this log or brush was considered the best and cheapest way to mark the route, as mowing would have been too slow.”⁷⁴ Roadbuilding was equally difficult when settlers expanded footpaths to accommodate heavy wagons and ox teams. When Samuel Merrill moved the government offices from Corydon to Indianapolis, it was noted that “one day the wagons accomplished but two miles,

⁷¹ Shirley S. McCord, *Travel Accounts of Indiana: 1679-1961* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1970), 103.

⁷² Shirley S. McCord, *Travel Accounts of Indiana: 1679-1961* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1970), 103.

⁷³ Jeff Bremer, *A Store Almost in Sight: The Economic Transformation of the Missouri River from the Louisiana Purchase to the Civil War* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 115-140.

⁷⁴ Henry Baker, "First Vincennes and Indianapolis Road," *Indiana Magazine of History* 3 (1907): 25.

passages through the woods having to be cut on account of the impassable condition of the road.”⁷⁵ William Holloway’s history of the city from 1870 flatly stated that in the early days “the means of communication between [Indianapolis] and other portions of the state were no better than those between neighbors in the town. There were no roads.”⁷⁶ Hoosiers, like most others on outskirts of the American infrastructure system, experienced one of the major difficulties of frontier life—establishing a basic system of roads so that they could travel through their chosen settlements.

Other voyagers described the difficulty in using roads during the first decade of settlement. Sarah Fletcher, Calvin’s wife, noted that their initial trip to Indianapolis “proceeded with much difficulty,” and that the “fatigues were much greater than I could have imagined therefore would advise every body who have a good situation in Ohio, to be contended.”⁷⁷ Her husband described a journey from the city to visit his cousin in Vermont. On his trip north out of the small village, Fletcher had to swim across Fall Creek, and “with some difficulty” got his horses across the White River. A few days later, Fletcher noted that he “had great difficulty in crossing” the “Marais de porche” near the headwaters of the Wabash and Maumee Rivers and “here lost my Spanish blade.”⁷⁸ After five days of travel, they arrived at Fort Wayne “dirty and hungry...in which time

⁷⁵ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 75.

⁷⁶ William Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870), 15.

⁷⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 41.

⁷⁸ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 108.

we made not far from 175 [miles] distance.”⁷⁹ Although Fletcher himself noted that he was “fond of being in the woods,” he would have almost certainly appreciated a path that would not have cost him his knife or left him tired and hungry.⁸⁰

Like most people living in the well-watered Midwest, Hoosiers quickly realized that rain and melting snow were hazardous to any potential travel plans. An 1829 article in the *Indiana State Gazette* described part of the transportation network, stating that “for a few months past, the roads leading to this place, have been unusually bad for the season. Last week a considerable snow fell, which has disappeared, and the rain which followed it has rendered them still worse than ever.”⁸¹ The lack of sound roads caused disruptions in another integral part of life when, in February of 1828, the *Indiana Journal* had to print an apology to its subscribers noting that “no paper was issued last week, on account of a failure to receive paper, owing to the extreme badness of the roads.”⁸² For Marion County residents, the poor quality of the roads was not just a burden on economics. Major social institutions like newspapers could shut down due to environmental factors on the frontier. Natural occurrences created severe burdens on frontier society by straining the capacity of rudimentary transportation infrastructure systems to accommodate social institutions.

⁷⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 108.

⁸⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 108.

⁸¹ *Indiana State Gazette*, November 19, 1829.

⁸² *Indiana Journal*, February 14, 1828. For another example of how poor road conditions affected newspapers, see Austin Brown, “The First Printers in Indianapolis: George Smith and Nathaniel Bolton” *Indiana Magazine of History* 2 (1906): 121-126.

The lack of efficient river or overland transportation networks also slowed city growth during the early days of settlement. Unlike Cincinnati or Louisville, Indianapolis did not have easy access to the powerful currents and deep waters of the Ohio River. The first general store opened in 1823 and, as late as 1825, there were only five store or tavern applications to the Marion County Commissioners.⁸³ In Cincinnati, by contrast, there were 187 people listed as merchants in the 1825 city directory.⁸⁴ Hoosiers had difficulty transporting goods to market and profits were gobbled up by expensive transportation costs. Traversable roads, rivers, and rails were absent from the city, which prevented Hoosiers from using the comparative advantages provided by manufacturing centers like Philadelphia, New York, Boston or even Cincinnati. As a result, the overwhelming feature of the economy of early Marion County was a lack of specialization.

This lack of specialization is noted in a local census from 1828. It shows that of the 203 families in Marion County, only 16 were listed as having a “farmer” as its head while there were 20 households listed as “carpenters.”⁸⁵ Many other heads of household were engaged in the various occupations needed in a small town including blacksmith, wheel wright, wagoner, shoemaker and other occupations. Only 14 families were headed

⁸³ David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1479; *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827, Marion County, Indiana* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

⁸⁴ Harvey Hall, *The Cincinnati Directory for 1825* (Cincinnati: Samuel Brown, 1825). The total number only included those listed as merchants. Including the number of the various grocers, barkeepers, shop owners and clothiers would bring the total considerably higher.

⁸⁵ *Indiana Journal*, Nov. 20, 1828. The people listed as “farmers” most likely consisted of those residents who shipped large amounts of corn and hogs to the Ohio River for export as a major portion of their income. The distinction between the other varying professions shows additional skills on top of composite farms.

by “laborers,” which, when coupled with the reality of low population density and available western land, suggests that the opportunity to obtain an independent living was readily available. Hoosiers could choose to visit the shop or store that could give them the best deal or fulfill their social obligations while, at the same time, suggests that Hoosiers felt little impetus to push themselves to improve their economic footing as described by Daniel Vickers.⁸⁶ In sum, Hoosier family units were not yet competing over specialized markets. The labor system in place was far more communal than market oriented because of the lack of transportation to external economies. Everyone farmed and most did other duties in the community, and economic conflict was absent because large profit margins were not accessible.

Lack of specialization does not mean that Hoosiers were self-sufficient. Richard Bushman argues that farmers were never self-sufficient during the eighteenth or nineteenth century.⁸⁷ They were forced to produce a large amount of their own goods but also relied on a system of production that was outside of their own control. They were responsible for a sizable portion of their own material goods and controlled the means of production including labor and most material, but they needed assistance to raise barns, build houses, and plow fields.

Evidence that Hoosiers were secluded from the rest of the United States and overwhelmingly responsible for their own produce is available from the earliest newspapers in Marion County. Newspapers represent the most basic level of information

⁸⁶ Daniel Vickers, “Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 47 (1990): 3-29

⁸⁷ For a discussion of the term “self-sufficiency,” see Richard Bushman, “Markets and Composite Farms in Early in America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 55 (1998): 351-374. It is doubtful he would agree that they were ever completely self-sufficient since communities have always worked together to accomplish economic goals.

exchange in nineteenth-century communities. Information printed in them reflects the values of the readership. If only a few people produced butter or beer, residents could spread improved methods by word of mouth or a simple letter passed from one person to the next. Taking the time to set type, and pay for publication of articles suggests that newspaper advertisements were the quickest method to disseminate information to the largest number of residents and was valued by the community.⁸⁸ One early article described the “Sale of Sheep” in Boston, arguing that “It may be expected...that these choice animals distributed thro’out the country, will, in a few years have a material effect in improving the quality of our flocks.”⁸⁹ Clearly, the author wanted readers to know of the improved breeds, but the resignation that those improvements would take multiple years shows the exclusion of Marion County residents from the immediate effects of new breeds. Informative articles on how to improve goods locally filled newspapers in early Marion County. One article in *The Farmer* gave details on how to make “good harvest beer,” another article explained “how to churn butter in dog days,” and another in the *Indiana State Journal* provided “A most excellent method for preserving butter from becoming rank” and how to make butter easier and that “comes sooner and saves much labor in working out the buttermilk.”⁹⁰ It was not that Hoosiers did not *want* access to better or cheaper goods. These newspaper advertisements clearly show that they were concerned with producing improved products. Residents of Marion County were forced to produce their own beer or butter because the environment and available transportation

⁸⁸ For an excellent example of this methodology, see Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin: 1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁸⁹ “Sale of Sheep,” *Indiana Journal*, Sept. 13, 1825.

⁹⁰ “Good Harvest Beer,” *The Farmer*, July 15, 1830; “How to Churn Butter in Dog Days,” *The Farmer*, July 15, 1830; “Making Butter,” *Indiana State Journal*, June 4, 1829.

technology insulated them from acquiring goods from areas that could produce them more efficiently. Instead, they made their own products and used any available information to improve the quality. The publication of these articles in the general newspaper instead of a trade journal supports the position that Marion County had a lack of specialization during the 1820s, as did many other regions that were on the edges of the United States economy.

Emigrants migrated to central Indiana using community networks as another strategy to assuage the difficulty of living on the frontier. Paul Salstrom argues that movement to the frontier following the Panic of 1819 slowed to a crawl because depressed land prices made it difficult for easterners to raise enough money to move west. He argues that emigrants moved West when prices were high in the East, as demonstrated by the influx of people during the good times of the late 1820s and early 1830s.⁹¹ He notes that settlers who moved to Indiana during the hard times of the early 1820s did so by using chain migration or moving in groups. Early records of settler activity in Marion County support this theory by showing strong connections based on family or community networks. Three examples represent different strands of common emigration patterns elucidated in John Mack Faragher's *Sugar Creek* and other works on emigration which were repeated in Marion County.⁹²

The first type of migration pattern show that men preceded their families. The best example of this pattern is George Pogue, who moved into central Indiana in early 1819, built a small cabin, established a sugar camp, began girdling trees and sowing

⁹¹ Paul Salstrom, *From Pioneering to Persevering: Family Farming in Indiana to 1880* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007), 72-74.

⁹² For patterns of emigration and settlement in the Old Northwest, see John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 56-59.

crops before his family came a few months later. John McCormick blazed a similar path. Around the same time, he and his two brothers, along with axemen and teamsters, cleared some land and built cabins to establish a base for their families.⁹³ This pattern of development, as occurred in Sugar Creek, was the earliest method of settling the new region. It was hard work but provided Americans with the opportunity to obtain land for free as squatters' rights were not yet firmly established in the new country.⁹⁴

The second, and most common, method of migration was through family groups that migrated sequentially. The receipts of the first land sale of Marion County land in 1821 show that of the 28 surnames with multiple given names listed in the land record, 22 settled within one mile of each other.⁹⁵ David Stoops of Franklin County, Indiana, purchased 160 acres of land in Wayne Township in November of 1822. Robert and John Stoops each purchased 80 acres two miles from David. In October 1824, William Stoops, also of Franklin County, bought 80 acres adjacent to David. Even speculators bought land near each other during the earliest years, presumably to allow one to prevent squatters from settling. Brothers Noah and Levi Wright of Washington County, Indiana, purchased a total of nearly 1,400 acres of land near each other in south central Marion County in November of 1822. While Levi remained in Washington County throughout his life, Noah moved to Marion County during the 1830s.

⁹³ Edward Leary, *Indianapolis: The Story of a City* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company), 7-8; William Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis: Indiana Journal Print, 1870), 8.

⁹⁴ Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Frontier Period* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 558.

⁹⁵ This was compiled from Jane Darlington's *Indiana Records Miscellanea* which listed the original location of land purchasers and referenced in reproduced land plat maps in *Maps of Indiana Counties in 1876*. Jane Darlington, *Indiana Records Miscellanea* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1968).

Another example shows the community-oriented chain migration nature of settlement. Land receipts show that immigration patterns maintained connections from previous regions. Residents from Monroe, Indiana—100 miles to the Northwest of Indianapolis on the Wabash River—settled in the southwest corner of the county. On July 20, 1821, James Culley bought 160 acres in Perry Township. The same day, Elijah Elliot bought a similar plot nearby in Decatur Township. Two days before them, Samuel Dodds acquired 240 acres also in Decatur. On July 23, 1821, John Cutler purchased nearby land just inside the boundary of Centre Township. The next year, Jasper Coons obtained 80 acres adjacent to Dodds. All of these plots are only a few miles from apart, and most were purchased within days of each other, suggesting that these settlers were planning on living near one another before they got to the land office. When Jasper Coons bought land the following year, he likely received a tip from a former resident of Monroe.⁹⁶

Similarly, Reuben and John Houghton of Fayette County, Kentucky, each bought 240 acres next to each other in Wayne Township on November 22, 1822. On October 4, 1822, Hans Murdough also of Fayette County bought a plot in the adjacent section to the north. On June 20, 1825, Aaron Masterson joined the Houghtons by buying a plot less than a mile away from his former neighbors. On July 21, 1821, Armstrong Brandon of Harrison, Indiana, just across the river from Louisville, bought 80 acres of land in Centre Township. He was accompanied by James Bell and James Pell, also from Harrison, who bought plots in adjoining corners of the same section of land.⁹⁷ On December 31, 1821,

⁹⁶ Jane Darlington, *Indiana Records Miscellanea* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Historical Society, 1986).

⁹⁷ James Bell and Pell may share the same surname. The *Records Miscellanea* does not account for transcription error.

John Stevens joined his former neighbors, buying 66.15 acres near Brandon and later enlarged his holdings on February 25, 1822, by purchasing 73.20 more acres in the same area.⁹⁸ Clearly, in Marion County as in many other frontier regions, relationships determined settlement patterns.

The final pattern of settlement during the early period of Marion County occurred through complete family settlement but was rarer than the community or family chain migration patterns. Calvin Fletcher, the prominent lawyer, moved to Indianapolis on October 1, 1821. It was not his first trip to the new capital as he made a brief trip to survey lots in July, but he permanently moved to the city without prior investment. He obtained a “small house to go into” in which he lived for a year while he built a new home for his family.⁹⁹ For Marion County, the varied settlement patterns show that settlers were following the same emigration patterns seen in other parts of the United States and suggests that the people coming to the region were carrying the same cultural patterns as the rest of the nation. They were not a group of like-minded people of conservative Germans, capitalist Yankees or individualist southerners. These settlers represent a cross-section of American society and suggest that the changes that occurred over the years were not caused by any imported regional cultural factors. Hoosiers as early as 1823 showed a diverse cultural background when Nicholas McCarty, a coastal Virginian, joined Calvin Fletcher, a former Vermonter, in leading city affairs. In addition, the arrival of Whitewater and Kentucky factions on opposite sides of the slavery

⁹⁸ Jane Darlington, *Indiana Records Miscellanea* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Historical Society, 1986).

⁹⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 37-38. Renting a house was a common way to acquire shelter in the earliest days of frontier settlement. See R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1950), 141-142.

debate further distorted the cultural homogeneity of the area. As Indianapolis historians David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows have noted that “from the very beginning, Indianapolis clearly had a diverse population.”¹⁰⁰ As one author notes, the environment presented a “land of challenges and opportunities” to early settlers of Marion County.¹⁰¹ The demographics of settlement in Marion County are significant because it suggests that what happened in central Indiana happened all along the Early West as the spread of settlement moved away from rivers. Marion County was certainly landlocked during its early development, but the developmental pattern caused by specific environmental barriers allow for an analysis of what a broad cross-section of Americans decided to do when confronted with transportation difficulties.

Settlers moved to Marion County because the region gave settlers the opportunity to obtain good agricultural land at a relatively cheap price. Northeastern areas were less feasible to family units because the higher population density and declining land fertility eliminated the option of splitting farms amongst children.¹⁰² In central Indiana, potential emigrants could obtain land at the government price of \$1.25 per acre at a minimum of 80 acres, but the price barrier certainly prevented some from obtaining land directly from the government land offices, even after the price was lowered in 1820. Speculators have been blamed for the lack of cheap land in the West by prominent historians.¹⁰³ Paul

¹⁰⁰ David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 52.

¹⁰¹ Jeffrey Tenuth, *Indianapolis: A Circle City History* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 11.

¹⁰² For competing views on Northeastern land usage, see Kenneth Lockridge, “Land, Population and the Evolution of New England Society 1630-1790,” *Past & Present* 39 (1968): 62-80; Richard A. Easterlin, “Population Change and Farm Settlement in the Northern United States” *The Journal of Economic History* 36 (1976): 45-75.

¹⁰³ The most important interpretation of speculator greed is Paul Gates, *The Farmer's Age: 1815-1860* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1962).

Gates stated that “In Indiana the dead hand of the speculator created many problems which were to stunt the growth and waste the resources of some sections of the state.”¹⁰⁴ However, new scholarship is challenging the stereotype of speculator greed. In Indiana, as Richard Nation argues, many families were not able to foot the bill for expensive initial investments, as such, “the role of speculators cannot be dismissed.” In fact, “speculative activity was not always a hindrance to settlement. Speculators sought profit, of course, but they were often willing to grant credit, before 1820 on more liberal terms than the government and after 1820 as the sole source” when purchasing land.¹⁰⁵ In Marion County, speculators like George Smith provided these benefits to Hoosiers. His advertisement in *The Farmer* proclaimed that he had “ten lots in good situations in Indianapolis, which I will sell low for cash in and or on a credit of from nine to eighteen months.”¹⁰⁶ Ultimately, the central Indiana frontier provided opportunity to both those with and without money. Smith was able to exploit the disconnect between government land sale policy that all funds be paid up front, while poorer settlers were able to get access to land that they wanted. This disconnect could only happen in a place where established markers of a modern capitalist society were absent. In the Northeast, speculators had a far more difficult time profiting because land values were more stable, which decreased potential profit margins, and families were less willing to sell land because of the cultural and social capital of farmers in early American society.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Paul Gates, “Land Policy and Tenancy in the Prairie Counties of Indiana” *Indiana Magazine of History* 35 (1939): 3.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 22.

¹⁰⁶ George Smith, “Lots for Sale,” *The Farmer*, July 15, 1830.

¹⁰⁷ For the social and cultural power of farmers in the early American republic, see David Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 65-69.

After obtaining land, families quickly turned to the business of creating and running a farm in the relatively unbroken forest. The prior ties used when emigrating were important for surviving the first few years of settlement on the disconnected frontier in Marion County. Much like embryonic farming communities in other parts of the United States, community connections could be the difference between success and failure during the early years of settlement. In Marion County, house raisings, apple parings, quiltings and other similar work-oriented social gatherings were necessary for the construction of a functional farmstead. Far from the independent pioneers who pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, most settlers in Marion County and the rest of the American frontier had significant amounts of help establishing their farms. One telling communal function was the annual “log rolling” that was relatively specific to Marion County as a functionally land-locked region. The dense forest was a deterrent to decent European farming during the 1820s, and Hoosiers spent the first few years of settlement clearing land to grow their crops.¹⁰⁸ Stephen Visser stated that “many a man bragged of how many acres of land he had cleared by cutting and burning the timber, thinking not at all of the wastefulness of the destruction. Trees seemed to be so abundant that little value was attached to them...However, if fields were to be obtained in Indiana, the timber had to be cleared, and since there was no market for it, to burn it was logical.” Oliver Johnson noted that, when recalling log-rollings, “sometimes I think those rollins was more for a general neighborhood get-together of talkin, banterin, eatin, and maybe a little whisky drinkin throwed in, than it was for jist rollin logs.”¹⁰⁹ As Johnson’s reminiscence

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Sargent Visser, *Economic Geography of Indiana* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1923), 32.

¹⁰⁹ Oliver Johnson, *At Home in the Woods* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1951), 155.

suggests, for Marion County settlers during the first few years of the 1820s, building a stable community network was at least as important as constructing homes and barns. Reciprocation and future need demanded that communities self-police and maintain social order, and characterize a major feature of a “pre-capitalist” society.

Public activities were not unique to central Indiana. They did, however, take on a special role in Marion County because they fostered community connections and served as a way to *create* community. John Mack Faragher has noted that “freeholds in Sugar Creek were linked through a reciprocal network. The cabin raising inducted newcomers into the neighborhood system by creating a web of common obligations.”¹¹⁰ For settlers of Marion County, the earliest bees and raisings were more important than any in a long-settled region because they helped foster the community connections that would make living on the frontier possible. Communities could not welcome people into Marion County in the same fashion that they could in Sugar Creek, Illinois, simply because no community was established. Community-oriented work was the first in which farmers could meet, greet and commune with each other to foster the kind of society necessary to succeed on the frontier. When George Pogue arrived, he built his lean-to and waited to build a larger dwelling until other farmers arrived. The early residents of Marion County population clusters, rather than immediately going into social debt to the surrounding community, gave credit to the community and trusted that they would get a return on their investment.

The need to create stable community networks emerged because Marion County existed on the outermost fringes of a Euro-American society during the 1820s. The

¹¹⁰ John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 136.

region lacked the capital and pool of available wage-labor for residents to depend on anything other than community ties. Money could buy the limited goods available in stores in Marion County, but labor was more expensive than anyone could afford. While eastern cities like Boston, New York or Philadelphia were quickly evolving into wage-labor systems and using capital investment to increase monetary wealth, the availability of land in Marion County created a different socio-economic landscape. Land allowed settlers to acquire their own access to food and goods, prevented the rise of a wage-labor system and allowed workers to maintain their access to the tools of production long into the nineteenth century in central Indiana. When compared to eastern cities, advertisements from Marion County clearly show that a lively barter economy held a strong presence in the Early West longer than it did in the East. They show that as the East Coast was drawing into the Atlantic World economic system, Indianapolis had not yet experienced the transformations—specifically the ubiquity of cash-for-commodity exchange—caused by the transition to wage-labor fostered by modern capitalism occurring on the East coast.

In eastern cities like New York, the age of barter was coming to an end during the first decades of the nineteenth century. As late as the 1810s, residents could build accounts based on barter in turkeys or gold watches. By 1825, however, the changes related to industrialization, transportation improvement and capital accumulation—most important, wage labor systems—were replacing the older, established artisan system of production with a wage labor system that promoted cash-based systems of exchange.¹¹¹ In Indiana, advertisements clearly demonstrate that economic interactions were rarely

¹¹¹ Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 29-30.

cash-based by 1825. Although some advertisements publicized “six cents a pound in specie” for fresh ginseng or that purchased wood “will be paid for by the day,” most promoted barter.¹¹² When Harvey Gregg posted his personal advertisement noting the sale of household goods, he stipulated that “[h]e would exchange all or part of [them] for horses, and allow a good price.”¹¹³ Robert Morrison, a Richmond, Indiana, merchant dealing in dry goods, announced that he “keeps a supply of the best quality Bolting Cloth...He also has on hand, a large quantity of Soal and Upper Leather, which he will exchange for good horses.”¹¹⁴ Non-cash exchange was not limited to horse trading. In 1827, James Givan placed an advertisement noting the sale of peach trees for three cents each, payable in “Cash, Country Produce or Labour.”¹¹⁵ Another ad entitled “Corn! Corn!” stated that the “undersigned wish to purchase corn, for which they will give in exchange Merchandise, Saddlery or Tayloring...They will also give goods, &c.. for any quantity of small white beans.”¹¹⁶ Residents could also trade goods for a newspaper subscription. Editors of the *Indiana State Gazette* stated that “corn will be received for debts due at this office” and that “[produce will be received in payment “for subscription] if delivered at the office.”¹¹⁷ Indiana’s economy was not developed enough to rely on such non-utilitarian abstractions such as monetary worth. Cash was not the best form of currency because, in a pinch, you could not eat it. Farmers were happy to pay in corn because they had it on hand, and merchants were happy to accept it because it lowered

¹¹² *Indiana Journal*, August 9, 1825; *Indiana Journal*, August 23, 1825.

¹¹³ *Indiana Journal*, August 9, 1825.

¹¹⁴ *Indiana Journal*, November 1, 1825.

¹¹⁵ *Indiana Journal*, March 6, 1827.

¹¹⁶ *Indiana State Gazette*, October 29, 1829.

¹¹⁷ *Indiana State Gazette*, October 29, 1829; *Indiana State Gazette*, October 29, 1829.

their families' risk if a shipment of goods was late or a drought increased the demand for corn and put them at a market disadvantage. Thus, when local tailor John Masey noted that he would perform tailoring services "on terms as reasonable as the state of the times will admit," he was proclaiming his right to potentially refuse cash or to request payment in goods in case of a financial hardship.¹¹⁸

Frontier societies like the one in Marion County needed barter exchange because of the low population and style of relationships. Farm work in the early nineteenth century is often romanticized as a period when neighbors looked after each other and would accept payment when their debtors could afford it. However, Christopher Clark has noted other reasons for the seemingly imbalanced trade that rural people often participated in. He states that "local exchange created networks of obligation alongside those already created by kinship or neighborhood."¹¹⁹ But whereas residents of western Massachusetts "tried to harmonize local exchange with the fluctuating rhythms of distant markets" beginning in the 1820s, Hoosiers in Central Indiana had no hopes of meeting distant markets in the earliest days of settlement.¹²⁰ The lack of transportation networks kept the non-cash economy at full-strength during a period of transformation in the Northeastern United States that would not reach a tipping point in Indianapolis until the mid-nineteenth century.

At the same time, banking during the first decade of the state's existence was under heavy duress. The limited economy and population of the state made it difficult for

¹¹⁸ *Indiana Journal*. September 6, 1825.

¹¹⁹ Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 33.

¹²⁰ Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 198.

banks to acquire the legally necessary \$30,000 in specie required to open its doors. Various unchartered banks existed in the state during the early years of settlement, but they were expressly put out of business in the 1816 Constitution. Even after the State Bank of Indiana was founded in March of 1817, the institution was located at the territorial capital at Vincennes, roughly 150 miles from the new Hoosier capital. That the State Bank was housed in Vincennes meant that Marion County residents would have to go without access to specie. They could accept bank notes, but the long trip to the State Bank made barter a much more feasible option for exchange during the early years of settlement.¹²¹ The Hoosier capital was on the frontier of the American commercial system as well the banking system in its own state.

The earliest history of Marion County is demonstrative of the experiences of many frontier regions. American families struggled to build homes and farms far removed from markets and skilled laborers. They established communities based on family and regional migration patterns that were repeated throughout the Midwest. They worked to improve the output of their home production so they could have a better quality of life, and they wanted to improve their economic situation by exporting any available surplus to distant markets. Ultimately, as Hoosiers moved back in time relative to the long-settled East Coast, they sought to rebuild the structures of society that they left in their original homes. They relinquished some of the gains made by industrial society in the hopes that they could increase their families' economic outlook.

Marion County, however, is also unique because it was one of the first times that settlement in the West occurred away from navigable river traffic. In 1825, the region

¹²¹ For a brief discussion of banking in Early Indiana, see Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 17-25;

was as secluded as any other area east of the Mississippi River because of a shallow river and technologically limited transportation technology. When politicians decided to move the Hoosier capital to central Indiana, they overestimated the viability of river transport. The result was a region that had a different settlement pattern than cities such as Cincinnati, Louisville or St. Louis. Instead of having the transportation benefits of the well-watered Midwest, they were forced to elongate the period of economic seclusion typified by life on the frontier. Residents were forced to maintain composite farms and rely on the barter system.

Hoosiers did not simply give up in their quest for economic success. The significance of Hoosier seclusion in 1825 provides a useful starting point for examining the mindset of Early West Americans when confronted with environmental barriers. By every measure, Marion County was the definition of what Timothy R. Mahoney called an “isolated outpost.”¹²² However, instead of caving, these Hoosiers applied the tools they knew to achieve their goals. While they struggled during the earliest years of settlement, they maintained a vision of success that would shape the history of the region and the state.

¹²² Timothy R. Mahoney, “Locating the Frontier City in Time and Space: Documenting a Passing Phenomenon,” in *Frontier Cities: Encounters at the Crossroads of Empire*, ed. Jay Gitlin, et al, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 153.

CHAPTER 3: “SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH: ESTABLISHING A LOCAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, 1828-1833”

In December 1827, Indiana Governor James B. Ray addressed his constituents in his annual Governor’s Message about the prospects of improving the state. Although he discussed myriad issues including education, social regulation, and the moral superiority of farmers, he focused most of his remarks on the issue of internal improvements. Building off the perceived connection between rural life and republican virtue, Ray proposed methods to improve the transportation networks of the young state. He wanted to support “those whose whole industry is identified with their country’s [soil].”¹²³ He asserted that previous state legislatures “have been engaged in theoretical disquisitions into the expediency of making considerable commercial improvements in the interior of the state; but not having the means within their grasp...no decisive step has been yet taken.”¹²⁴ Ray, however, suggested to his listeners that the time was upon them to use the power of the government to improve the state’s infrastructure and economy. He argued that the land grants provided by the federal government to establish roads in the state presented an opportunity to turn a theoretical discussion of internal improvements into a practical one, thus initiating one of the most significant discourses in Indiana—and national—history.

Historians have noted the debates over tariffs, abolition, temperance, republican virtue and other issues revolving around the economic transformations of the United States in the early nineteenth century.¹²⁵ The massive economic changes of the period

¹²³ *Indiana Journal*, December 11, 1827.

¹²⁴ *Indiana Journal*, December 11, 1827.

¹²⁵ For the significance of the tariff, William Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). There is a massive historiography

compounded with issues of western expansion to create one of the most tumultuous periods in American history. The most significant debate in early America centered on national investment for internal improvements. American regions fractured over the question of whether the national government should involve itself in what many people viewed as state issues. Coastal residents of Massachusetts and Virginia—relatively developed areas—bristled at the thought of higher taxes to pay for road building projects in western states like Indiana, Kentucky or Tennessee. Developed areas were loath to raise taxes on themselves to pay for improvements in hinterlands.¹²⁶ National debates were echoed on the state level. In Indiana, developed regions like Vincennes, Lawrenceburg and Jeffersonville—all near major rivers—were wary of taking on large internal projects because they would benefit less directly from improved market-access for interior farmlands.¹²⁷ Unsurprisingly, the pro-internal improvement faction emerged victorious in Indiana. The increasing number of people who lived away from easily accessible water transportation forced politicians to side with the farmers who supported internal improvements. As late as 1850, ninety-five percent of the population of the state lived on farms.¹²⁸ Like most westerners in the early nineteenth century, Hoosiers were

on abolition in the United States. See Ronald Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). For one early but important interpretation of temperance and its importance to American economic change, see Herbert Gutman, "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," *The American Historical Review* 78 (1973): 531-588; for a lengthy and complex historiography of republicanism, see Daniel T. Rogers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *The Journal of American History* 79 (1992): 11-38.

¹²⁶ The best work on this topic is John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvements: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹²⁷ For discussion on routes, competition and obstacles, see Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1976), 22-51.

¹²⁸ Jeffrey Tenuth, *Indianapolis: A Circle City History* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 47.

focused on improving the effectiveness of their overall commercial networks. They envisioned their farms as outlets for republican virtue and economic success.¹²⁹

As an ever-increasing number of Hoosiers trickled north away from the Ohio River and its tributaries, the political power of the river valley cities waned and politicians adapted their rhetoric to capture the new constituency. As such, Governor Ray's 1827 message represented a common theme during this period. In the new vision of the state, Hoosier farmers would feed into the growth of industrial cities in the Northeast and abroad. Cathy Matson notes that scholars who have studied republicanism have found a wealth of sources when examining debates over internal improvements, but in Marion County, hardly any debates on whether or not to conduct internal improvements existed at all.¹³⁰ By the 1820s, Hoosiers did not debate the merits of internal improvements or whether the desire to connect to the market threatened the legacy of the founding fathers. Instead, the discussions of internal improvements focused on what to build and how to pay for improvements. As such, the story of Indianapolis, by 1820, suggests that people emigrating to the West were looking for opportunity rather than seclusion. Like people in other parts of the nation, Hoosiers altered the vision of republicanism to fit their objective of providing a competence to their family through commercial achievement.¹³¹ They did not worry about the same questions of

¹²⁹ For one excellent discussion of the Jeffersonian ideal and political economy of the western United States, see Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). For a specific discussion of how Americans connected rural life to republican virtue, see Tamara Thorton Plakins, *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life Among the Boston Elite, 1785-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

¹³⁰ Cathy D. Matson, "Capitalizing Hope: Economic Thought and the Early National Economy," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16 (1996): 285.

¹³¹ On this transition in thinking, see Tamara Plakins Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life to the Boston Elite, 1785-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

republicanism as those who remained in the East, who worried about the burgeoning class stratifications caused by wage labor.¹³² The availability of land did not strain social relationships between large and small landholders in the Early West. This absence of tension allowed a vast majority of Marion County residents to work in lockstep toward integrating into markets as quickly as possible during the first decades of settlement.

The previous chapter argues that Central Indiana pioneers were forced to adopt non-specialized economic strategies like those seen in Northeastern communities in the 18th century. The combined challenges of limited transportation technology and environmental realities prevented Hoosiers from recreating their previously established economic routines. The setting was similar to the rest of the eastern woodlands, but developed in a different economic style than regions with better access to water transportation.¹³³ As many other historical works show, however, Americans have altered the natural world to fit their aspirations and needs. In the case of Central Indiana, Hoosiers quickly moved to alter the landscape to fit their visions of economic success. Hoosier efforts to quickly connect to outside markets is a significant marker of intent that sheds light on a large historiographical debate regarding the transition to capitalism.

¹³² The historiography on republicanism is vast. For an excellent overview, see Daniel T. Rogers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *The Journal of American History* 79 (1992): 11-38. One example of how republicanism was becoming strained in the East is seen in Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980).

¹³³ Frederick Jackson Turner would call this area the "frontier." I do not disagree with his terminology but the historical literature has skewed his interpretations as racist, sexist and Euro-centric. A close reading of "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" will surprise many contemporary readers with Turner's relative sensitivity to issues of race, gender and ethnicity during the early 20th century. However, that this region was the "frontier" is nearly beyond contestation. It existed on the far-most outer edge of the Atlantic World trading network that was central to the economy of the United States. Hoosier settlers, while moving out to the edge of the frontier, were looking to establish solid economic opportunities so that they could hold profitable positions as land- or business-owners as the frontier receded.

To date, the analysis put forward by Clark stands relatively unassailed by rural historians, especially in the Early West. While this is a testament to earlier work, it has hampered further research. While prominent historians like Christopher Clark offered new perspectives on the transition to a modern market economy, his analysis focuses on a region that was settled long before the stirrings of the so-called Market Revolution occurred. The Northeastern part of the United States had a significantly different settlement pattern than that of the Old Northwest. Settlers moved into western Massachusetts long before the transition to capitalism emerged. The long-standing ties created during the pre-transition era provided Americans in the Northeast with a community safety net that alleviated some tensions and exacerbated others. Churches, the entrenchment of generations-deep kin networks, and strong community bonds created relatively stable social security networks when economic times got tough. Marion County, however, shows a significantly different perspective. These networks were absent on the early western frontier simply because social institutions did not have time to emerge before the transition to capitalism emerged in the 1820s. Whereas Christopher Clark examines evolving social relationships during the transition to capitalism, this dissertation seeks to enlighten the *establishment* of those relationships on the frontier during that same transition. It examines the strategies used by residents in the Early West as they carved out lives for themselves and compares them to those in other parts of the nation to understand the spread of capitalism. In order to understand the values and mindsets of ordinary Americans, historians must get away from the East and examine the

ways that western communities reacted to the changes associated with the transition to capitalism.¹³⁴

This chapter argues that by the 1820s, Marion County residents were firmly pushing to connect to markets and argues that perceptions of market orientation in the American psyche were established by 1820. These Hoosiers immediately sought to implement strong local government structures and to establish roads that would allow them to sell their agricultural goods to markets outside central Indiana. The construction of these networks would allow residents to obtain higher prices. While some Americans sought to remain secluded from markets—the Owenites being the most famous example in Indiana—the prevailing spirit of the age suggests that most Americans in the West thought they were better served by market connection than by seclusion. Whether they believed they could alter the market to fit their culture or simply ignored the possibility that economic integration could force change upon them, Hoosiers were solidly in favor of establishing stronger market connections. Ultimately, the actions of Hoosiers during this period show that American westerners were firmly looking to invest in infrastructure to achieve future economic gain. That they strove so vociferously to join capitalist markets by the 1820s allows historians to speculate when a major aspect of the “capitalist mentality” became a central part of American society in the Early West.

The chapter begins by examining the early attempts Hoosiers took to establish contact with the rest of the American economy. Hoosiers had an extremely bullish view of their new homes during the first years of settlement. With little hesitation, they built

¹³⁴ One historian who is reexamining the evolution of capitalism in the Midwest is Jeff Bremer, *A Store Almost in Sight: The Economic Transformation of Missouri from the Louisiana Purchase to the Civil War* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014).

roads and attempted to improve their market advantages in the increasingly interconnected, industrializing American nation. Most importantly, Hoosiers did not experience conflicts over market connection in the way that other historians have stated. Unlike previous arguments—overwhelmingly focused on the northeast—that suggest some Americans were resistant to the arrival of the market, Marion County shows that people looked to quickly jump into regional, national and international market economies even as they heard about the rising problems of urbanization from eastern newspapers and reform organizations.¹³⁵ Hoosiers believed that they would escape the failings of modernization occurring in eastern cities because of their reliance on the republican virtue bestowed on farmers. For residents of central Indiana, the debate over internal improvements was one of debt. They debated how they would pay for the widely-accepted improvements.

In Marion County, the secluded environment led to strong support for internal improvements from all groups. Reflecting the changing dynamics of state settlement patterns annual messages from Governor Ray promoted internal improvement programs throughout the state and in Marion County specifically.¹³⁶ As early as 1825, the *Indiana Journal* summarized his promotion of internal improvements. The editor noted that the Governor pushed to remove obstructions from the White River which would “afford, at certain seasons, a safe passage for boats, and thus would be opened a channel for the exportation of the produce of an extensive body of country.”¹³⁷ In his 1829 address, Ray

¹³⁵ See James Henretta, “Families and Farms: Mentalité in Pre-Industrial America,” in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 35 (1978): 3-32; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

¹³⁶ Richard Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 132-163.

¹³⁷ *Indiana Journal*, December 15, 1825.

continued to note the value of improvements on the White River. He stated that “no doubt is entertained that steamboats may traverse the White River if well improved...and that the seat of government, will ere long be visited by these messengers of Fulton’s genius.”¹³⁸ For Ray and other local leaders, connecting the new state capital would allow residents to exercise the full potential of their individual labors through steamboat travel up and down the only water channel in the region.

Regional politics certainly were an issue at the state-level, and were made clear during the 1824 presidential election. Hoosiers in the southern third of the state were ambivalent toward internal improvements. Dearborn County, on the border of Ohio near Cincinnati, voted overwhelmingly to support Andrew Jackson and his stance against a national debt. Henry Clay, the perennial champion of internal improvements, was a distant third with less than ten percent of the vote. Marion County, by contrast, gave nearly two-thirds of its support to Clay while Jackson and Adams came in second and third respectively. The 1828 election seemed to reflect this trend as well. Dearborn County continued its support for Jackson, albeit with a much smaller margin of victory. Marion County turned its allegiance to Adams in large part due to Jackson’s noticeable lack of support for internal improvements. They gave over sixty percent of their support to the incumbent.¹³⁹ Calvin Fletcher described his personal feelings regarding the election in a letter to his brother Elijah. “As long as I regard the interest and welfare of my country...I cannot support any man for president who goes head and with the friends of General Jackson; for no state in the union is more deeply interested in the success of

¹³⁸ *Indiana Journal*, January 11, 1829.

¹³⁹ Dorothy Riker and Gayle Thornbrough, *Indiana Election Returns, 1816-1851* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society): 4-13.

the leading measures of the present administration than Indiana.” He continued by noting that “two of the electors on the Jackson ticket at our last presidential election and one of our electors [in the 1828 election] have wrote to him of late, demanding an unequivocal answer as to his sentiments in relation to the present system of internal improvements and informing him that on his answer being unfavorable thereto they cannot give him their support.”¹⁴⁰

Those sentiments were echoed by local newspaper editors who reported favorably on internal improvements in central Indiana. The *Indiana Journal* had the “pleasure of announcing to our readers the passage of the bill by Congress which authorizes the continuation of a National Road, that which empowers this state to construct the road from Lake Michigan to the Ohio River.”¹⁴¹ Another insightfully argued that the policy of the state should be “not only to sustain the East, who have capital, in the establishment and encouragement of domestic manufactures for the sake of obtaining a market to go to, but to encourage a general system of internal improvements for the purpose of obtaining a conveyance for our property to that market.”¹⁴² The author believed that supporting a system of manufactures and internal improvements would build a natural advantage for the entire nation. Easterners could construct industrial networks to escape the monopolistic clutch of England while westerners could focus on providing food surplus to those industrial centers. Finally, the article noted that “it is only by this means that the Western can ever expect to be put upon a level with Atlantic and Southern states.”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 145-146.

¹⁴¹ *Indiana Journal*, March 27, 1827. This road is known as the Michigan Road.

¹⁴² *Indiana Journal*, July 3, 1827.

¹⁴³ *Indiana Journal*, July 3, 1827.

These feelings were prevalent in Hoosier papers during the early years of settlement and show that residents, far from distrusting internal improvement, were staunchly in favor of them. Internal improvements were the tool that early westerners would use to launch themselves into the national economy.

While some Hoosiers wanted to bolster the economy by solidifying national transportations systems, other internal improvements aimed to diversify the local economy of Marion County. The *Journal* argued “the time must soon come, when the exertions of only a small part of our number will be required for building houses. Then unless other employments are sought out, the industry and economy of the present and past will be succeeded by idleness, poverty and vice.” For the author, the city of Indianapolis and the surrounding community would suffer from lack of work unless they diversified the economy to include jobs less reliant on the booming housing market. The author continued by arguing that “at least \$10,000 annually has been paid by citizens of Indianapolis for [goods] imported from abroad.” He ultimately concluded that they must improve the local economy by adopting new technology, noting that “we can hardly expect in the present age of improvement to be able to compete with others without the aid of steam.”¹⁴⁴ The writer was aware that only the use of steam power could create the kinds of mills and factories that were necessary to provide stable employment to the population and begin the exporting goods from the city instead of relying on imports.

Newspapers also discussed the advantages of internal improvements in other parts of the nation and described how similar investments could improve the local economy. An 1827 article in the *Indiana Journal* described the formation of a Baltimore company

¹⁴⁴ *Indiana Journal*, Nov. 20, 1827.

“chartered by the Maryland Legislature, for the purpose of making a Rail road from the Chesapeake to the Ohio...When completed, it will not be of less advantage to the Western country than the Ohio and New York canals.”¹⁴⁵ Another article published two weeks later discussed the benefits of rails over canals, stating that railroads would save seven million dollars in construction costs as well as time and money on each trip. The author’s excitement over the possibility of saving so much money and time was evident when he exclaimed that the rail will “mightily tend to increase the transportation of the commodities of every description from one part of the United States to another...Thus will scientific power conquer space, and even the Alleghenies sink, as it were, beneath the pressure of unconquered steam, may the laws of gravitation give way before the march of mind!”¹⁴⁶ Clearly, the editor of the *Journal* was a proponent of railroads and, even though he may have overstated reality, he certainly reflected the enthusiasm Hoosiers held for transportation network improvements. Significantly, the enthusiasm for internal improvements was not limited to the *Indiana Journal*. The *Indiana State Gazette*—a reliably Jacksonian paper—proclaimed in a positive manner that “the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal was opened on Saturday the 17th October, amidst the greatest demonstration of joy from an almost innumerable multitude assembled on the occasion.”¹⁴⁷ That both Whig and Democratic newspaper editors reported favorably on the installation of projects in the East suggests that both groups were inclined toward promoting internal improvements and that political debate in the region focused on different issues.

¹⁴⁵ *Indiana Journal*, March 27, 1827.

¹⁴⁶ *Indiana Journal*, April 10, 1827.

¹⁴⁷ *Indiana State Gazette*, November 5, 1829.

The records of the Marion County Commissioners also show that there was very little conflict over internal improvements in the region. As shown in chapter one, the geographical limitations of Central Indiana prevented Hoosiers from easily connecting to markets. However, residents of Marion County immediately sought to remedy the situation by promoting internal improvements in the state that would connect them to cities on the Ohio River and, thus, the wider economic world. These actions suggest a different story than older narratives posed by historians of the West during the transition to capitalism. John Mack Faragher's *Sugar Creek* has been the standard interpretation of the transition to capitalism in the Old Northwest region because of its incredibly detailed reconstruction of a frontier community that struggled with transportation issues and the tensions of an ever-encroaching market economy. For Faragher, however, transportation improvements postdated economic incentives for economic exchange. While residents only sought twelve road permits before 1846, he notes that "from 1846 to 1860 Sugar Creek men filed sixty-one petitions for the relocation and improvement of old roads and for the laying out of new ones." The filers of these petitions were, moreover, increasingly landowners and landlords. They began petitioning for roads after the transition to capitalism fostered landlord-tenant sharecropping relationships between community members.¹⁴⁸

For Faragher, the Panic of 1837 was a significant event in the development of transportation infrastructure. The families who were able to weather the economic storm during the late-1830s were able to purchase land at low rates and then rent to new arrivals or those who lost their land. The sharecropping surplus drew wealthy men to push for

¹⁴⁸ John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 188.

roads because they had more crops than they could use to sustain their family. But they would only do so when profits were available. The Panic depressed crop prices to a point where exporting agricultural goods was not a profitable endeavor. Thus, they sought out external markets to dispose of their excess goods only after the rise of crop prices in national and international markets during the mid-1840s.

In contrast, the Marion County Commissioners' Record shows an immediate and sustained push to build roads and establish local transportation networks that would allow residents to move goods more efficiently. The first six years of the Record show fifty-one petitions for roads in Marion County which dwarfed any other business undertaken by the committee.¹⁴⁹ In Marion County, settlers planned to immediately market surplus crops. They did not—as in Sugar Creek—wait for the economic conditions to draw them into national commerce. The first meetings of the County Commissioners met in 1822 and focused on establishing government institutions including a courthouse, tax rates, officers, jails and a public well. However, they quickly turned to road construction. At the May 13, 1822 meeting, the commissioners heard a petition from local farmer “William Townsend, signed by a number of resident citizens and free holders of this County, praying for a new road to be viewed ‘Beginning at the north end of Pennsylvania Street in the Town of Indianapolis, thence the nearest and best way to the Mills at the Falls of Fall Creek.’” The commissioners appointed local farmers Joel Wright, John Smock and Zadock Smith to view the road and comment on its potential effectiveness.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

¹⁵⁰ *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

At the next session in August, Wright, Smock and Smith stated that the road would serve the public interest and it was approved as a public thoroughfare.

This simple government business was a major aspect of development in Marion County during the first years of settlement. Establishing a basic road system allowed Hoosiers easier access to various local necessities including mills, brickyards and tanneries and was crucial for accomplishing the goal of being the economic hub of the Old Northwest. When Isaac Pugh, James Miller and Martin Martindale viewed a road “running south and crossing Big Eagle Creek a few rods below David McCurdy’s [residence], thence as high and good ground as could be found to Little Eagle Creek a few rods west of John Fox’s [residence], thence intersecting the Barnhill road a short distance above Captain Anderson’s,” they were constructing an economic network that allowed their neighbors access to the necessary community structures that would permit them to increase their profitability when shipping their goods to mills or downriver.¹⁵¹

The same goes for Isaac Pugh’s petition for a road from “the South East corner of Isaac Pugh’s farm, thence north to the corner of said Pugh’s sugar camp thence west through said Pugh’s land till near the line between said Pugh and James Miller, thence nearly north to the said Pugh’s northwest corner, thence north west to the north east corner of Jerry Johnson’s farm...thence west through Samuel Barnhill’s new wheat field, thence N. West to Samuel Barnhill’s saw mill.”¹⁵² The language of the petition shows the economic focus of these roads. The road starts at Pugh’s farm, continues past his sugar camp, to the Johnson farm, to the Barnhill wheat fields and finally to the lumber

¹⁵¹ *Commissioners’ Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827* Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941.

¹⁵² *Commissioners’ Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827*, (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

camp. These were not roads connecting farms for the sake of strong personal bonds—although community building was almost certainly part of route planning. They were designed with efficient agriculture in mind. Building a road to Barnhill’s mill would make it easier for the farming community in the western portion of Marion County to obtain lumber for fences, barns and homes without having to struggle through forest land.

Road building was so popular in Marion County that disagreements over a particular road were rare. Out of the fifty-one petitions from 1822 through 1827, only nine were challenged. Five were rejected by the County Commissioners for various reasons including lack of appropriate notice or being deemed “unfit for a road.”¹⁵³ The remaining four contests over road building were remonstrated against by local citizens and only one was a serious debate over the placement of a road. David Pattingale’s petition for a road was argued against by James Fivan and Harris Tyner and ordered to be viewed anyway in May 1824. Another remonstrance by Isaac and Jacob Pugh was laid over in August 1824. And in July of 1825, the petition by S.G. Michaels was argued against and reviewed for utility. Through 1827, the vast majority of road petitions that were not accepted were done so with public utility in mind.¹⁵⁴ Successfully blocking construction of local roads shows that Marion County officials did not rubber-stamp projects or push them through without thought. They took a measured examination of proposed roads and appointed local residents to view them for the purpose of utility and propriety. The elimination of particular roads shows that Marion County Commissioners

¹⁵³ *Commissioners’ Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

¹⁵⁴ *Commissioners’ Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

looked at individual road projects and believed each to be necessary for county function and highlights the community support for the roads that *did* get built.

The only major remonstrance came in May 1823 when Robert Brinton, Henry Brinton and Peyton Bristow petitioned the County Commissioners to disallow a road proposed by John Smock on November 11, 1822. The remonstrators hired a lawyer to prevent a construction of a road “likely to be useless furthersome to the Township.”¹⁵⁵ It is not stated why the remonstrators did not want the road, which would have passed through their land. Perhaps they did not want to pay taxes for it or, more likely, they did not want a public road cutting through their acreages. In May 1824, the commissioners read a report that attested that “the road will be of public utility” and established it as a thoroughfare. The original remonstrators were charged \$7.75 in fees for the extra costs of viewing the road. In November of 1824, Robert Brinton applied to have the road vacated, which was ultimately rejected by the Commissioners.¹⁵⁶ Overall, the Marion County Commissioners’ Record paints a different picture of development in the West than the one described in *Sugar Creek* and suggests that, by 1820, Americans had market orientation in mind.

The establishment of roads was very important for Marion County as an economic unit. It also served as a way for early local residents to make extra money. Farmers were paid to view and lay out roads, which helped them acquire cash to pay down debts or acquire goods in the earliest days of settlement when access to markets was very limited. Like the northeastern farmers discussed by Daniel Vickers, midwestern farmers also

¹⁵⁵ *Commissioners’ Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

¹⁵⁶ *Commissioners’ Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

looked for other ways to obtain cash and maximize income during their free time. In Marion County, farmers were required to participate in road construction and maintenance for two days annually. They were also paid seventy-five cents for each additional day worked on county projects. These were paid out of the county treasury and surely helped pay for store-bought necessities in a society where cash was a relatively scarce material.¹⁵⁷

Farmers were willing to use the government as a source of income because there was an absence of cash in Marion County. Jacob Piatt Dunn states that “There was comparatively little money in circulation, and what there was of specie was silver... There were no banks of any kind until the internal improvement period opened, and people who had money carried it when necessary and stowed it away about their houses when not in active demand.”¹⁵⁸ Nicholas McCarty’s account books shows that there were few ways to get paid in the early days of settlement. In the mid-1820s, he made trips to Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati to acquire goods to sell at his shop on Washington Street. Even when McCarty did get goods back to Marion County, he was forced to barter because of the absence of specie. His account book shows that in 1825, central Indiana lacked the available specie that would allow cash-oriented trade. Zachariah Glover paid his twenty-two dollar debt to McCarty with three barrels of whiskey. And in November of 1825, he credited Samuel Stevens with thirty dollars in exchange for eight barrels of flour.¹⁵⁹ As noted by various historians, cash was absent

¹⁵⁷ *Commissioners’ Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

¹⁵⁸ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis, Vol. 1* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 342.

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas McCarty, *Account Books, 1824-1837, Invoices, 1835-1842* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Historical Society).

from the capital in a way that prevented the rise of a developed economic infrastructure.¹⁶⁰

The absence of specie forced Hoosier merchants like McCarty to function on a limited basis when dealing with long-distance trade. Timothy Mahoney notes that the limited access to outside markets and the inability to establish credit markets was a feature of frontier society. Indianapolis, and Marion County as a whole, were subjected to this type of economic seclusion due to a lack of specie. In the Old Northwest, the relatively new communities did not have surplus specie to establish these types of credit networks. This basic reality is the most significant evidence of central Indiana's location on the economic frontier. Much like Timothy Mahoney suggests, Indianapolis was not able to produce its own goods. Merchandise needed to be imported from abroad and then distributed to the community. It was in the initial stage of development as an isolated outpost that existed on the far reaches of eastern economies.¹⁶¹

The only mitigating factor to this development was the presence of the state government, which allowed local residents to acquire much needed specie by undertaking road construction projects. This is a significant factor separating Marion County development from economic maturation in parts of the Northeast, where established communities could evolve with changing economic times and merchants could use their profits to start lending institutions. Winifred Rothenberg's excellent analysis of the

¹⁶⁰ See Logan Esarey, *A History of Indiana: From its Exploration to 1850* (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Company, 1918), 447-463. See also, Andrew Cayton, *Frontier Indiana*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996): 279-281.

¹⁶¹ Timothy R. Mahoney, "Locating the Frontier City in Time and Space: Documenting a Passing Phenomenon," in *Frontier Cities: Encounters at the Crossroads of Empire*, ed. Jay Gitlin et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 153.

emergence of credit markets notes that there was enough available money in circulation that residents could invest in securities by the 1780s.¹⁶² In Marion County, private members of the community often lacked the ability to acquire specie. The government provided the steadiest opportunity to receive cash payments for labor during a period where most merchants still functioned on some level of goods-based trade.

Locals urged the Marion County Commissioners to open new roads because they could get their crops to market more easily and earn extra cash on the side, but they were not alone in their calls for increased transportation networks. Newspapers explained to readers how internal improvements would assist in the development of the region. The *Indiana Journal* argued for the symbiotic relationship between the East and West by stating that it should become “our policy not only to sustain the East, who have capital, in the establishment of and encouragement of domestic manufactures for the sake of obtaining a market to go to, but to encourage a general system of internal improvements for the purpose of conveyance for our property to that market when it shall be procured. The eastern people are disposed to render us every aid in their power to accomplish this most desirable object.”¹⁶³ The author recognized that sending domestic goods to the East Coast was the best way to improve the local economy and that a system of internal improvements would increase the opportunity to do so. He continued his promotion of improved transportation networks by warning that “it is only by this means that the Western can ever expect to be put upon a level with Atlantic and Southern states” and noting that “hence our interests are identified, and...it is our duty to unite in sustaining

¹⁶² Winifred Rothenberg, “The Emergence of a Capital Market in Rural Massachusetts, 1730-1838,” *The Journal of Economic History* 45 (1985): 781-808.

¹⁶³ *Indiana Journal*, July 3, 1827.

this desirable system of policy.”¹⁶⁴ Another article promoted the value of an expeditious passage of the Michigan Road, designed to go from Lake Michigan through Indianapolis to the Ohio River. It stated that “it is of primary importance to the State of Indiana, that the late Treaty made with the Miami and Potawatomie nation of Indiana, should be ratified...and particularly that article in the said Treaty, by a grant of land is made to the United States [to build the Michigan Road] because it will tend greatly to promote the national interest, and the commercial prospects of Indiana.”¹⁶⁵ The *Indiana State Gazette* also noted how internal improvements were a boon to the local region. It noted that “the work now progressing on the National Road, and the prospect of something actual being done with regard to the road from Lake Michigan, at the ensuing session of the Legislature, has inspired a new confidence in the people, and they go forward, in improving the country, with a more lively zeal than heretofore.”¹⁶⁶ A final article entitled “Internal Improvements” from April, 1827, used imagery from ancient Roman society to argue that by building roads, “the most distant parts of the world are brought comparatively near to each other.”¹⁶⁷

The author was trying to clearly explain the advantages of building roads to his readers by laying out examples of how roads could improve a region but argued that roads should be constructed with care. “Internal Improvements” states that when building roads, residents must be careful to avoid simplistic, straight-line construction. “The erroneous idea of a straight aerial line, is not only received as truth by country

¹⁶⁴ *Indiana Journal*, July 3, 1827.

¹⁶⁵ *Indiana Journal*, December 26, 1826.

¹⁶⁶ *Indiana State Gazette*, November 19, 1829.

¹⁶⁷ *Indiana Journal*, June 19, 1827.

surveyors and road makers, but has crept into legislative enactments.”¹⁶⁸ The author urged readers and legislators to consider that level roads be constructed rather than destinationally-oriented ones. “More practical blunders [of straight-line roads instead of level-roads] have been committed in this country in this branch of civil engineering than in any other...the principle that should be received in preference is, that the road which will be travelled in the shortest time, between two places of different elevation; is that which approaches nearest to a plane of uniform inclination.”¹⁶⁹ He contends that the mistakes of straight-line construction of roads without considering environmental barriers was on display in an Ohio turnpike from Trenton to Brunswick which “has for twelve years enjoyed the unenvied reputation of being the worst turnpike road in the United States” because it was constructed on a “straight line upon the ground between two points.”¹⁷⁰ While the author argued that elevation changes and interposing ridges were potential issues when building roads, “the most important is, the nature of the soil, which will sometimes call for deviations of a still greater amount from straight line.”¹⁷¹ Ultimately, while promoting the construction of roads, the *Indiana Journal* reminded that “the convenience of the inhabitants, the position of old established settlements and villages, are also points that should never be neglected.”¹⁷²

Residents of Marion County were also willing to push for related economic investments to their region. The author of the *Indiana Journal* article promoting steam power got their wish in 1828. On January 28, Nicholas McCarty, Benjamin Blythe and

¹⁶⁸ *Indiana Journal*, June 19, 1827.

¹⁶⁹ *Indiana Journal*, June 19, 1827.

¹⁷⁰ *Indiana Journal*, June 19, 1827.

¹⁷¹ *Indiana Journal*, June 19, 1827.

¹⁷² *Indiana Journal*, June 19, 1827.

James B. Ray announced that stock subscriptions would be offered to the public.

Echoing the sentiments of newspaper editors, the announcement proclaimed that investing in the mill would allow residents to succeed economically and that “the large sums continually sent from our vicinity may be retained at home and we may become an independent and prosperous community.”¹⁷³ By 1831, the “extensive dimensions” of the mill were completed. The forty-five by fifty foot, four-story mill had “power for propelling 2 pairs of stones, two sets of carding machines, and a saw.”¹⁷⁴ Mill investors hoped that if they built a central station, the members of the community would come to use the facilities. Transportation difficulties created a different outcome.

The failure of the Indianapolis Steam Mill in 1835 happened, as James Madison notes, because “it proved, in fact, to be too big, capable of producing more goods than the local market could consume.”¹⁷⁵ The residents of the farthest reaches of the county found it difficult to travel several miles to Indianapolis to grind grain or saw wood and then haul it home, especially before effective roads were established. While it was useful for nearby farmers, the population within the immediate vicinity of the mill was limited, and poor transportation systems turned it into a boondoggle for investors. The population of Marion County in 1830 was only 7,192 and was relatively well balanced throughout the county.¹⁷⁶ As a result, the value of transporting grain from the outer reaches of Lawrence or Warren Township to the mill and back home soaked up any potential time or profit

¹⁷³ *Indiana Journal*, Feb. 14, 1828. The advertisement is originally listed on January 28, 1828, but the issue is missing from the record.

¹⁷⁴ *The Indiana Gazetteer* (Indianapolis: Douglass and Maguire, 1833), 91.

¹⁷⁵ David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 62.

¹⁷⁶ *Fifth US Census*.

gains that the mill attempted to provide. The outer edges of Marion County were roughly ten miles from the mill itself, located on the White River just above the National Road Bridge extending from Washington Street.¹⁷⁷ This trip would have cost as little as a dollar and a half and as high as seven dollars each way.¹⁷⁸ Other estimates argue goods were \$.50 per one hundred pounds for each twenty miles.¹⁷⁹ Including the return trip to pick up the milled goods could have cost the average farmer up to twenty-eight dollars per load each year just to transport goods.

The value of corn in Marion County also did little to help the prospects of Indianapolis Steam Mill. Calvin Fletcher noted in an 1823 letter to his brother that his farm produced about 75 bushels of corn per acre.¹⁸⁰ In Marion County, most farm purchases were forty or eighty acres during the 1820s and 1830s, suggesting that they were single-family affairs. The first few years of settlement were limited to about ten acres as families began the necessary improvements for increasing output.¹⁸¹ Supposing

¹⁷⁷ Marion County is almost an exact square and the mill was just east of the direct center of the county.

¹⁷⁸ The wide variation in figures is caused by inexact data on freight rates at the local level. George Rogers Taylor argues that freight rates on for road travel were between 30 and 70 cents in 1819. Using these prices and accounting for the price decrease of transportation after the Panic of 1819, the price of freight could have potentially dipped to fifty percent of their earlier cost. The average cost is presumably somewhere in the middle of these estimates for several reasons. George Rogers Taylor asserts that road condition is a major factor in transportation cost. Marion County roads were little more than rutted, stumpy paths which would have driven prices considerably higher. However, residents of Marion County would have been able to cut transportation costs by selling some corn for necessary goods in town or cycling their milling schedule to drop of additional loads of corn when the previous were finished. Overall, it is likely that the average cost of transportation in Marion County was slightly higher than the average proposed by Taylor because of the poor availability of roads. See George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution: 1815-1860* (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1951), 132-135; Thomas Senior Berry, *Western Prices before 1861* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 71-79.

¹⁷⁹ See Percy Bidwell and James Falconer, *A History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860* (New York: Peter Smith, 1941), 181.

¹⁸⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 88.

¹⁸¹ Percy Bidwell and James Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States*. (New York: Peter Smith, 1941): 168. They argue that the initial acreage necessary for farming was only 4-5 acres.

that eight acres were used for corn production, the average farmer produced 600 bushels equaling roughly seventeen tons of corn.¹⁸² The price of that corn was only ten to twenty cents per bushel at the time totaling sixty to one hundred twenty dollars per year.¹⁸³ If residents on the outer edge of the county spent an average of seventy dollars on transportation, they faced the very real possibility of losing money by using the Indianapolis Steam Mill.¹⁸⁴ Thus, local families did not transport their goods to the new mill built on the White River. Instead, they relied on nearby, smaller mills that dotted the countryside. The negative margins and the absence of a navigable river kept families from centralizing their economic activity and prevented Hoosier businessmen from acquiring the kind of capital necessary to further expand economic activity.

This sentiment is echoed by Percy Bidwell and James Falconer's estimates that in the nearby Wabash River Valley, "corn could not stand the expense of moving 20 miles, even though produced at no cost, and wheat could not be profitably transported by land more than 50 or 75 miles."¹⁸⁵ The transportation cost of getting crops to the mill severely curtailed any efforts to obtain profits; any effort to ship them to the Ohio River and thence to New Orleans would require extremely favorable economic circumstances. Thus, it is no surprise that Hoosiers did not immediately specialize in growing corn and

Here, ten acres is used for a general calculation based on the time settled and the growth family labor that would allow for increased tillage. Certainly some farms cultivated more land and some less, but the purpose here is to get a general idea of the economic atmosphere of the time.

¹⁸² Wheat production was not common in Central Indiana until the 1840s. See Paul Salstrom, *From Pioneering to Persevering: Family Farming in Indiana to 1880* (West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 2007), 82.

¹⁸³ Percy Bidwell and James Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States* (New York: Peter Smith, 1941), 177.

¹⁸⁴ The seventy dollar figure is based on staggered shipments that would minimize empty hauls and a four dollar per round trip shipment cost.

¹⁸⁵ Percy Bidwell and James Falconer, *A History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860* (New York: Peter Smith, 1941), 181.

wheat and patronize the Indianapolis Steam Mill. Ultimately, the mill was an ambitious attempt by boosters to establish the city as a center of commerce, but the reality of transportation economics forced it out of business.

The construction of the Indianapolis Steam Mill was emblematic of the early hopes of city residents who dreamed of establishing an economic dynamo within the first decade of settlement. Rather than hope for seclusion from the market, the vast majority of all citizens worked diligently to make the new state capital an inviting economic outpost. From practically uncontested support for road clearing and construction at the local level, to wide-spread support for internal improvements candidates in national elections, Hoosiers in Central Indiana were adamant that they could build a transportation network that would foster economic activity and growth that would make them a center of regional economic activity. Local transportation networks were not able to handle the scale of shipping necessary for the mill to become a success, but Hoosiers were adamant that their city was destined to become an economic behemoth. Residents of Marion County, overcoming the warning signs that they should proceed with economic investment carefully, surged forward into the biggest economic bubble the nation had ever seen.

CHAPTER 4: “ONE BIG BILL AND A DREAM: THE MAMMOTH INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS ACT IN MARION COUNTY, 1833-1837”

On January 16, 1836, the Whig-dominated Indiana state legislature passed the Mammoth Internal Improvements Act, which Whig governor Noah Noble happily signed into law. The “Big Bill,” as it was fondly called, enacted a system of internal improvements in the state that was designed to improve transportation and make Indiana a more attractive haven for settlers. Hoosiers were thrilled with the passage of the bill. One commenter noted that “On Saturday night Indianapolis was most brilliantly illuminated as a manifestation of joy for the passage of the bill.”¹⁸⁶ Even the *Indiana Democrat*, which had vociferously opposed taking out loans to complete all projects at once, had kind words for the project, stating that “the citizens of Indianapolis consider themselves one hundred percent richer than they were but one week since.” The opposition newspaper also noted that they wished that “all party feeling may be swallowed up” in favor of supporting the system of internal improvements and promoting the interests of the state as a whole.¹⁸⁷ Expectations for the bill were high as passage of the bill gave rise to sentiments that “we doubt not that population and capital will flow into our state...and we believe many of the present generation will live to see Indiana the third state in the confederacy.”¹⁸⁸ Calvin Fletcher bluntly stated that “10 years will multiply our population. This town will progress from 8 to 12 thousand our state more than a million should the improvements progress.”¹⁸⁹ Hoosiers in Marion County, as they did across the state, had high hopes for the future of their region. Marion County

¹⁸⁶ *Indiana Journal*, January 19, 1836.

¹⁸⁷ *Indiana Democrat*, January 19, 1836.

¹⁸⁸ *Indiana Journal*, January 19, 1836.

¹⁸⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 303.

Commissioners redistributed money toward road projects that would allow access to major internal improvements projects and residents in Marion County constructed the origins of a time-based system that would allow for more efficiency and overall economic success.

The signing of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Act culminated the most intense fight of the first half of the nineteenth century in Indiana. Hoosiers, recognizing the economic power provided by shipping, discussed the need for a transportation infrastructure system early in the territorial days of the late eighteenth century. Even before statehood in 1816, Hoosiers schemed to construct a canal system around the falls of the Ohio River across from Louisville.¹⁹⁰ The 1820s, as shown in earlier chapters, further encouraged the expansive system of internal improvements as information about the success of the Erie Canal spread across the nation. By the 1830s, residents were encouraged by the development of their state so much so that they ignored obvious warning signs like the failure of the Indianapolis Steam Mill that the local economy simply could not support explosive growth. In his 1832 “Governor’s Message,” Noble stated that “among the various topics deserving your attention, there are none fraught with more important consequences to the future prosperity of the state...than the [Wabash and Erie Canal].”¹⁹¹

The background of the Big Bill is an important part of the story of Marion County development. Before its passage, Hoosiers in Marion County were secluded and without real hope of improving the economic outlook of their region. During the 1830s, however,

¹⁹⁰ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 2-21.

¹⁹¹ *Indiana Journal*, December 5, 1832.

as the success of the Erie Canal became evident, a great excitement overtook the nation and central Indiana was no exception. After 1832, when the Hoosier legislature accepted a federal land grant to fund the Wabash and Erie Canal by March 2, 1832, a surge of internal improvements projects encompassed the Indiana state government. Paul Fatout argues that calls to implement internal improvements emerged after it was certain that the state would take on debt to facilitate economic growth.¹⁹² In response, the state legislature approved a \$400,000 loan in 1833 to extend the Wabash and Erie further south and to provide for further surveys on other potential canals. As Fatout notes, Hoosier lawmakers were “performing limbering-up exercises” to accommodate their constituents’ dreams of becoming a commercial center of the West.¹⁹³

There were several reasons Hoosiers were excited to construct a system of improvements. First, the prevailing mood of the era suggested that the good times would continue to roll. The Atlantic World banking system was heavily invested in the land boom occurring in the American Early West for multiple reasons including: Andrew Jackson’s ability to reestablish ties with British islands in the Caribbean and the resulting increase in agricultural prices; the ever-present need for cotton in English textile mills; and high silver reserves that drove inflation which made farm and land investments worthwhile. The land speculation and western migration of the United States made economic stability seem like a sure bet.¹⁹⁴ Second, Hoosiers did not want to fall behind developments in other western states. The internal improvements of Indiana were based on the idea that the Wabash and Erie Canal would connect the Ohio River at Evansville,

¹⁹² Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 52, 59.

¹⁹³ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 59.

¹⁹⁴ For a quick background on this see, Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 502-503.

Indiana, to the Great Lakes near Toledo, Ohio. The canal would be the western-most point of access to the east coast, which made it an attractive program to many in the state and to those further west. Ohio's access to this system would be limited to the relatively scant thirty-two miles of canal between Lake Erie and the border with Indiana. The dominant portion of the canal would run through Indiana to the Ohio River and make Indiana a major thoroughfare for western river traffic. Hoosiers were thrilled with the opportunity to become a major transportation hub which would increase land values and tax revenue. Hoosiers were scared that Ohio would cut off their access to Lake Erie and accused Ohioans of trying to sandbag Indiana development from achieving its full potential.¹⁹⁵ Finally, the presumed increase in crop prices influenced local feelings in Marion County. Prices for agricultural goods in Indianapolis were extraordinarily low for the Early West. Jacob Piatt Dunn noted that "Grain was selling for from thirty to fifty cents a bushel more on the Ohio River than it was in central Indiana."¹⁹⁶ The prospect of connecting the city with the Ohio River, coupled with stories of the success of the Erie Canal put dollars signs in the eyes of Hoosier farmers and merchants alike by slashing transportation times and costs and increasing the profitability of the fertile cropland.

As a result of these positive feelings, the discussion over the internal improvements debate was multi-sided but, significantly, almost no Hoosiers were against improvements.¹⁹⁷ The opponents of starting individual internal improvements projects in

¹⁹⁵ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 27-28.

¹⁹⁶ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Indiana and Indianans: A History of Aboriginal and Territorial Indiana and the Century of Statehood* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1919), 392.

¹⁹⁷ A major strain of historiography suggests that the idea of the yeoman landowning farmer was the true legacy of the Founding Fathers. Many historians—focusing mostly on the South—argue that the Americans wanted to avoid advancing to a new stage of economic development. A short but useful introduction to the topic and a rebuttal to this argument is seen in John Majewski, *Modernizing a Slave*

central Indiana voiced their opinions vociferously because they wanted a different *kind* of improvement. This argument is historiographically significant because it suggests that the capitalist mindset existed on a region-wide basis. Hoosiers were already recalibrating their vision for the nation along lines of economic modernization rather than simply yeoman landowning. The National Road had support of some members of the state legislatures as evidenced by the vote over the Wabash and Erie Canal. The opposition to expanded funding of the northern canal came almost exclusively from the southern third of the state. There were also opposition votes from Marion and Wayne County, both set on the National Road. The support and opposition to the Wabash and Erie extension was extremely bipartisan, with pro- and anti-Jackson forces on both sides of the issue.¹⁹⁸ A letter to the editor in the *Indiana Journal* blatantly defended roads with a populist bent. “Jack” derided railroads by stating that “Now all know what a state road is, but not one in ten thousand of us ever saw a rail road—we scarcely know what it is.” He continued his tirade against railroads, saying they were “a great incubus...for “a few capitalists” to ride over poor people on, that will eventually involve the state in an immense debt.”¹⁹⁹

As noted above, as late as 1836, Hoosiers were still convinced that canals were the best option for accomplishing their economic goals. An article in the *Indiana Journal* matter-of-factly showed the secondary nature of railroads in Hoosier plans for economic development by stating that the White River Canal should be connected to the Central

Economy: The Economic Vision of the Confederate Nation (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 4-11.

¹⁹⁸ Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996), 186.

¹⁹⁹ *Indiana Journal*, July 3, 1835.

Canal “by canal if practicable, and if not by a Railroad.”²⁰⁰ Residents of Shelbyville, Indiana, reacted “with no excitement or even casual mention” of the first railroad trip in the state in 1834.²⁰¹ And even the normally introspective Calvin Fletcher was noticeably silent about his rail travels during his tour of the Northeast in 1836. He provided an offhand mention of traveling by rail but nothing induced him to comment on the new form of transportation. In contrast, he fondly noted a trip down on the Wabash and Erie Canal only a year before in his diary, stating that “it was an inexpressible delight to all the company...to glide along upon the Waters that by nature were & had been by the Great Architect from the beginning designed & used to run into the St. Lawrence now by art & science made subservient to the purposes of commerce in the great valley of the Wabash making their way to the Mississippi.”²⁰² It seems that Hoosiers were more interested in canal projects during the 1830s as part of a national trend to emulate the success of the Erie Canal. Instead of examining the transportation tools that would best suit their city, residents of Indianapolis focused on copying the methods of success in eastern cities without realizing environmental realities.

Hoosiers rarely questioned the type of improvement they wished. The major disagreement of the period revolved around how to pay for it. Two distinct sides emerged on the question of improvement economics. One side argued for a “general system” of improvements that would take out loans, construct all works at once, and reap the rewards as Indiana quickly emerged as the economic center of the West. The second side urged for a “gradual system” where they would focus on major projects like the

²⁰⁰ *Indiana Journal*, January 19, 1836.

²⁰¹ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 62.

²⁰² *Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, Vol. 1, 1817-1837, 261.

Wabash and Erie Canal first, then use the revenue from the completed projects and increased land sale prices to construct further works. Whigs supported the general system and Jacksonians supported the gradual system. Donald Carmony has stated that “the General Assembly probably would have adopted a system at its session in 1834-1835, but for the inability of legislators to agree regarding which works should have priority.” After the meeting, State Treasurer Nathan B. Palmer even stated that “a decided majority appeared to be in favor of entering into a general system [sic], but the rock upon which they split, was the details of the bill.”²⁰³ A scathing article about the flaws of the general system from the *Indiana Democrat* noted that the state would be ruined by “debt, bankruptcy and ruin, by a set of aspiring office hunters, from which she will never be extricated, except by a ruinous system of taxes” and argued that classifying the acts would save the state from the dishonor of economic ruin.²⁰⁴ Supporters of a general system noted that internal improvements would not pass without following a “whole system” of improvements at once because no region was willing to classify their project as less important than any other.²⁰⁵

The debate over how to pay for internal improvements is important because it suggests that by the 1830s, Americans in Marion County had a relatively clear view of the function of government. The experience of Marion County reflects what John Lauritz Larson, in his study of the relationship between government ideology and internal

²⁰³ Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 191.

²⁰⁴ *Indiana Democrat*, August 2, 1837. While the article did predict the eventual collapse of Indiana finance, it is worth noting that the original article was published in the *Wabash Mercury* in Lafayette, IN, which would benefit the most from classification. The Wabash and Erie Canal would have certainly been the first or second project funded under the classification system.

²⁰⁵ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 72.

improvements, posits. During the 1830s, federal projects were simply unobtainable because of political gridlock. State governments tried to accomplish the goals of creating internal improvements system, but the Panic of 1837 wiped out any hopes for continued government planning in the eyes of the electorate. “Fearing abuse from designing politicians, midcentury Americans thought they saw in the ‘invisible hand’ of competition an incorruptible arbitrator for desperately clashing interests.”²⁰⁶ Clearly, the aforementioned “Jack” represented a faction of Hoosiers that were apprehensive of taking out loans to build a railroad. However, Hoosiers—even fiscally conservative Democrats—were not opposed to internal improvements. They provided wide support for projects like the National Road or local road construction. Opposition emerged because they did not want to pay for projects that would not directly help them. They did not want to create projects that would take away traffic—and thus future funding—from projects that were already close to home. Instead of trying to prevent the spread of a commercial market, these Hoosiers were more concerned about having funding and traffic move away from where they lived. They were not debating internal improvements; they fought over economic regionalism.

After serious political haggling through 1836, the signatories of the Big Bill announced a plan that would construct a general system of improvements across the state. Projects included the Wabash and Erie Canal, the Whitewater Canal, improving the National Road, the Central Canal and various other projects.²⁰⁷ To finance these projects,

²⁰⁶ John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvements: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 6.

²⁰⁷ The politics of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Act is well documented. See Logan Esarey, *A History of Indiana* (Indianapolis: W.K. Stewart & Co., 1915), 353-358; Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996), 191-194; Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Indiana*

Hoosier legislators called for a financing of loans of \$10,500,000 through the State Bank of Indiana for the construction projects. An internal improvements board of commissioners was put in charge of the projects and a group of canal commissioners were charged with acquiring the loans from external sources through the sale of state bonds.

In summer of 1836, three fund commissioners went to New York to secure loans. Governor Noah Noble appointed Dr. Isaac Coe, an Indianapolis physician, as one of the fund commissioners—the others being Jeremiah Sullivan of Madison and Samuel Hanna of Fort Wayne. Coe was the only successful negotiator, getting \$500,000 in loans with J.J. Cohens and Brothers, “one third to be paid at once, the remainder in four months; and of \$1,029,000 with Thomas Biddle and Company of Philadelphia, and the Morris Canal and Banking Company of Jersey City, \$440,000 of the latter to be paid November 1, the remainder as called for in one year.” Hoosiers were thrilled with the success of Dr. Coe’s efforts to secure funding to begin their projects in earnest. By the end of 1836, the board of commissioners had spent \$423,995.06 to begin surveying and grading projects across the state, but much of that was deficit spending until Coe’s success at discharging state bonds.²⁰⁸

Donald Carmony has noted that canal commissioners felt comfortable beginning projects because of three basic beliefs. First, Hoosiers believed that they could construct a transportation network through long term borrowing at low interest rates. Second, he suggests that those residents believed they could pay back those large loans through the

and Indianans: A History of Aboriginal and Territorial Indiana and the Century of Statehood (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1919), 382-412.

²⁰⁸ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 79, 83.

gained revenue from internal improvement projects, and especially the Wabash and Erie Canal. Finally, they believed that the construction of internal improvements projects would increase the population of the state and the value of property, which would raise enough tax revenue to cover the loans. However, Carmony also notes that “*Faith* in these *suppositions* was the *cornerstone* on which the Internal Improvements System of 1836 was fabricated.”²⁰⁹ Politicians were forced to choose a general system because of political gridlock. They were also tied to the legacy of the Erie Canal in New York. Hoosiers pined for the success of the Erie Canal, which was an added encouragement for a general system.²¹⁰ Support for internal improvements in one area were contested by those in other areas with claims that their project was the best to go first.²¹¹ Few Hoosiers were willing to ask the difficult questions regarding the practicality of the loans. Nicholas McCarty, while a supporter of the whole system movement and taking out loans, resigned as canal commissioner because the Big Bill did not factor the repayment of loan interest into the costs of the project.²¹² Thus, when the internal improvement law passed, little speculation focused on the potential for economic vulnerabilities of the state.

The significance of the Big Bill to Marion County residents was unmistakable. Of the ten million dollars acquired by the state to complete the projects, three and a half million were designated to completing the Central Canal—by far the most of any of the

²⁰⁹ Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 189

²¹⁰ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 31-32.

²¹¹ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 67.

²¹² Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 491.

other seven projects.²¹³ Hoosier politicians argued in unison that they needed to connect the center of the state to the rest of the national economy. Calvin Fletcher noted that “Town property raised in value” in his diary on June 15, 1835, as discussion of internal improvements swirled in the state. Speculators also emerged to drive up property values. Fletcher stated that “Several men from [Connecticut] were here on the 8th & bo’t property. Merchant Tailor from Cincinnati gave very high [for] property.”²¹⁴

The squabbling over internal improvements across the state was not echoed at the local level. Every region was looking for market access and each locality wanted to plan what was best for their community. Marion County was no different. As noted in the previous chapter, the push for local road projects dominated the early concerns for infrastructure in County Commissioner meetings. Hoosiers were very comfortable letting their state government finance projects that would bolster market opportunities. By the early 1830s, the Marion County Commissioners were using the Three Percent Fund to improve roads to foster development of roads to different parts of the state.²¹⁵ At the September 1833 meeting, the County Commissioners voted to distribute the \$450 they received from the state to improve roads to Brookville, Madison, Fort Wayne, Lafayette, Crawfordsville and other important points. Hoosiers continued to build on these transportation networks during the following years, and their expenditures reflect their desire to connect with larger national markets. Of the \$450 approved for improving

²¹³ A nice overview of this is seen in Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Indiana and Indianans: A History of Aboriginal and Territorial Indiana and the Century of Statehood* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1919), 392-394.

²¹⁴ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 256.

²¹⁵ The Three Percent Fund was established by the federal government to bolster improved roads before the emphasis on canals and railroads emerged. See Lawrence Malone, *Opening the West: Federal Internal Improvements before 1860* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1998), 25.

Marion County roads, the commissioners spent significant portions on roads that would connect with the Wabash and Ohio Rivers. The roads to Brookville, on the Whitewater River and near Cincinnati, received \$70 as did the Madison Road, the shortest overland route directly to the Ohio River. The Lafayette State Road received \$65 and the Fort Wayne State Road toward the Maumee River that ran into Lake Erie received \$60. Lesser roads each received \$30 or less. The work on these four roads represented over half of the expenditures of federal money in Marion County and show which roads county residents thought would become the future major transportation arteries of the state capital.²¹⁶ Two years later, the Commissioners reiterated their support for these major roads with additional spending. The Madison and Brookville roads received \$60 each while the Lafayette road received \$70.

Most important, the 1835 County Commissioners put significantly more money toward traditional overland routes. Roads to areas like Winchester, Crawfordsville and Leavensworth obtained quantities of between \$15 and \$50.²¹⁷ These quantities reflected the political realities of the era. During the early 1830s, Hoosiers were caught up in the swift current of internal improvements and politicians were promising to build a canal to every city and a road to every village. The Wabash and Erie Canal, proposed as early as 1817 by famed New York Governor DeWitt Clinton, to connect Lake Erie with the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers represented one reason why cities like Fort Wayne or Lafayette were sound destinations from any Indianapolis centered road as late as 1834. However, the continuing conflicts centering on the Wabash and Erie Canal during the period

²¹⁶ *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 2, 1827-1834, Marion County, IN*, Part B (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

²¹⁷ *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 2, 1827-1834, Marion County, IN*, Part B (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

warned that the waterway may not be completed in a timely manner, thus making the northward investment to Fort Wayne less profitable than strengthening the more secure, local southern and eastern connections on the Ohio or Whitewater rivers.²¹⁸

The road heading toward Fort Wayne—near the headwaters of the Maumee River—represents the best example of politics affecting local infrastructure economics.²¹⁹ Although County Commissioners did continue to build a road toward Fort Wayne, by 1835 they renamed it the Andersontown State Road. It was a point nearer the capital that was still a stop on the way to Fort Wayne, but was conspicuously headed toward Muncie and the head of the Whitewater River on the eastern side of the state that flowed toward Cincinnati. The 1835 expenditures on roads reflected a distinct focus on constructing local transportation networks as nearly two-thirds of the Three Percent Fund was used to construct local roads.²²⁰ Ultimately, the political atmosphere kept Marion County residents focused on connecting local roads to already established southern markets. They were unsure of the future positions of Indiana canals, so they took a reserved approach when spending money on local transportation networks.²²¹

The focus on improving local roads ended in 1836. As the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill emerged, borrowed money flowed to different internal improvement projects throughout the state. County Commissioners again reimagined the structure of

²¹⁸ Crawfordsville, Leavensworth and Winchester are all oriented to the south and east of Marion County, and reflect the traditional settlement patterns of the state rather than the radical departure from those patterns that road building to the north would be.

²¹⁹ For one short examination of Fort Wayne and its significance for the Wabash and Erie Canal, see Charles, Poinsett, *Fort Wayne during the Canal Era, 1828-1855* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1969).

²²⁰ *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 3, Part A., 1834-1840, Marion County Indiana Part A* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

²²¹ For a discussion of political fighting regarding canal construction, see Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 67-68, 69-71.

state transportation systems by using Three Percent Fund money to build roads to major rivers. In May 1836, the Commissioners allotted \$230 for the road to Brookville, \$250 to the road toward Lafayette, \$220 to the Crawfordsville road toward the Wabash River south of Lafayette, \$150 toward the Madison road and an additional \$220 to the Andersontown Road. The other eight state roads in Marion County were allotted \$360 combined suggesting that the County Commissioners were refocusing on their attempts to connect Indianapolis to the surrounding river systems in the state.²²² The October meeting further supports this as the Commissioners were giving out the remainder of the years' Three Percent Fund appropriations, a significantly smaller amount totaling \$435.89. This smaller amount was still appropriated toward the major roads to cities on rivers including Madison and Cincinnati. The Madison road received \$120 and the Brookville road obtained \$80. Roads toward the north, which would connect to the Wabash, also received larger portions of the remaining funds. The Lafayette and Andersontown roads each received \$40 while the Crawfordsville road received \$30. The seven remaining roads received a total of \$125.89.²²³ Clearly, the Marion County Commissioners' allocation of funds represented the future plans of the city. They wanted to make sure that their products could reach external markets by focusing on building roads to the nearest river crossings. They were unable to break their vision of a water-based transportation system that they brought with them from their eastern homes.

In order to more easily connect to markets, residents of Marion County immediately promoted internal improvements in the state designed to connect them to

²²² *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 3, 1834-1840, Marion County, IN, Part A* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

²²³ *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 3, 1834-1840, Marion County, IN, Part A* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

cities on the Ohio River and, thus, the wider economic world. The unanimity of these actions during early settlement suggests a different story than older narratives posed by historians of the West during the transition to capitalism. Road building in Marion County shows something about the temporal and spatial development of the Old Northwest and challenges the dominant historiography of development in the region. John Mack Faragher's *Sugar Creek* has been the standard interpretation of the transition to capitalism in the Old Northwest region because of its incredibly detailed reconstruction of a frontier community that struggled with transportation issues and the tensions of an ever-encroaching market-based economy. Faragher's work, however, shows that the story of Sugar Creek road building was quite different than Indianapolis.²²⁴

For Faragher, transportation improvements postdated the transition to capitalism. While residents only sought twelve road permits before 1846, he notes that "from 1846 to 1860 Sugar Creek men filed sixty-one petitions for the relocation and improvement of old roads and for the laying out of new ones." He notes that the filers of these petitions were increasingly landowners and landlords. Roads were built to sell the excess crops they received as rent from their tenants.²²⁵ The timing of this increase of petitions is significant. Springfield became the state capital in 1839, so there was much less of a need for traffic to and from the city before that moment which explains the early dearth of road petitions. The aftermath of the Panic of 1837 also probably prevented Illinoisans from wanting to quickly spend time and money building roads as the national economy was in shambles until the mid-1840s. In contrast, the Marion County Commissioners'

²²⁴ John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). See also, George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution: 1815-1860* (New York: Routledge, 1977).

²²⁵ John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 188.

Record shows an immediate and sustained push to build roads and establish local transportation networks that would allow residents to move goods more efficiently. The first six years of the County Commissioners' Record show fifty-one petitions for roads in Marion County which dwarfed any other business undertaken by the committee.²²⁶ Settlers planned to immediately market surplus crops and were convinced—as previously noted—that their agricultural skill would allow them to dominate western trade. For Faragher, residents began petitioning for roads after the transition to capitalism was nearing completion, as landlords fully controlled the land and needed transportation routes to export their sharecrops.²²⁷ In Central Indiana, the combination of the new political center and the upswing in the regional and national economy is more explanatory of the mode of development than the emergence of landlord tenant relationships in explaining causation of road building. Marion County residents jumped into the regional and national economy with both feet. They did not—as in Sugar Creek—wait for economic conditions to draw them into national commerce. It was a “democratic” transportation revolution rather than an “oppressive” one.

Hoosiers also evolved their conception of time-consciousness to adapt to the expectation of external market connection. Time-consciousness is important for understanding the development of an industrial society. As E.P. Thompson has noted, “a general diffusion of clocks and watches [was] occurring...at the exact moment when the industrial revolution demanded a greater synchronization of labor.”²²⁸ The development of time-consciousness in Marion County in the 1830s is an important factor in

²²⁶ *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Record Survey, 1941).

²²⁷ John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 187-190.

²²⁸ E.P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” *Past and Present* 38 (1967): 56-97.

determining the location of the economic frontier in the United States. Settlers moved to the new capital from several regions, including the Northeast. For those migrants, Indianapolis' lack of a coherent time system was a step backward in the development of a "modern" society.²²⁹ Calvin Fletcher's diary entry from April 18, 1836, shows that Hoosiers were beginning to experience an entry into the time-based system that water-based cities and well connected agricultural regions in the Northeast already experienced. He noted that "Mr. Cole sent my watch home which he bought at Philadelphia...The first article I have had for 10 years for the express purpose of ascertaining how time passes."²³⁰ This brief entry highlights the pattern of development along the inland frontier. Calvin Fletcher moved to Indianapolis in October of 1821. He was born in Ludlow, Vermont, and was educated in Westford, Massachusetts, until about 1817. Sometime between his birth in Ludlow and his arrival in Urbana, Ohio, Fletcher took an appreciation of keeping the time. In a letter to his parents, he recounted how he spent his days. "You may want to know what proficiency I make in the study of Law. Sir, I bend my mind to it as much as possible...I make a division of my time. I keep school 7 hours in a day. I study 1 hour at noon 4 at night & 3 in the morning. I have made it my rule for 2 months to go to bed at 11 and get up at 5 but often get up at 4. I feel very avaritious of

²²⁹ I use the term "modern" to describe society to illustrate the delineation of different stages of development. Indiana progressed with the goal of being a "first class city" in the West. They tried to copy the developments of other major American urban centers and reproduce their institutions including time-consciousness. When those settlers moved west to a place where they were not immediately able to effectively reproduce those institutions, they were taking an institutional step backward in order to move forward in the long term.

²³⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 331-332.

my time.”²³¹ The specific descriptions of time usage and efficiency hints at the presence of time consciousness that began permeating eastern regions during the 1810s.²³² When Fletcher stated that his watch was the first one that he had in ten years for the express use of telling time, he shows us that the Old Northwest region away from rivers was less reliant on time than those cities closer to major waterways. His acquisition of and appreciation for a time-keeping device reflected the expectation of the spread of an interconnected market economy that would reach into the American hinterland in the near future.

The increasing population of the town and size of the government caused a need for more efficient systems to emerge that could handle the increasingly complex needs of the city and state. Martin Brueghel has pointed out that the evolution of time-consciousness emerged in the Hudson River Valley because merchants at the river landings were increasingly turning toward time-orientation to maximize the efficiency of each trip down river. He argues that these merchants altered conceptions of time in rural society because profits would only be high if transportation costs were driven down and shared amongst a large number of farmers. As a result, farmers wanted to make sure that they were at the local landing at the same time—which required time orientation—in order to minimize the transportation costs and maximize profits for their agricultural goods. This change is noticed in Calvin Fletcher’s diary. In the early 1820s, there are few mentions of specific times. He describes his tasks by the day or section of day. He

²³¹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 12-13.

²³² This dissertation does not argue that a fully developed system of time consciousness existed in Marion County by 1836, only that the foundation of one emerged as Hoosiers expected to connect to exterior markets in an increasing volume and distance.

notes on Christmas, 1821, that “I have done but very little this day. I got up about sunrise...About 10 o’clock I went to the river.”²³³ The next week, on New Year’s Eve, he stated “A very agreeable day...Reading Robinsons History of America A.M. P.M. repaired my chimeny visited Mr. Foot.”²³⁴ Fletcher, during the early period of 1821, did not focus on writing down the specific times that he accomplished his chores or met his friends *even though he had something to tell the time*. His diary from 1836—*noted above*—suggests that he had some timekeeping device until around 1826. Clearly, focus on time was less important to Calvin Fletcher in 1821 than it was in 1818 when he lived in Ludlow, Vermont.

There was a major change by 1835, however, as Fletcher routinely used his watch to discuss the passage of time. On June 17, 1835, he notes that “At 12 o’clock came home found Mr. Reed from Va at my house from Lynchburg on his way to Laport. His family were at Buck Creek. Pleasant day. At 2 went with a man to my farm to see the same he desiring to buy a farm...The stage arrived this eve 6 o’clock brot the unpleasant news of cholera at Madison.”²³⁵ During the 1830s, as the expectation that Hoosiers would build a canal to connect Marion County with the rest of the regional economy, Fletcher became very specific in mentioning the times that events occurred. This change in habit suggests that the timing of events was more important in 1835 than it was a decade earlier and is evidence that the city was gearing up to improve its ability to participate in regional trade networks. Ultimately, the pattern of time-consciousness that

²³³ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 84.

²³⁴ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 85.

²³⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 257.

occurred in Marion County suggests a similar pattern of events from the Hudson River Valley as proposed by Brueghel. The relationship between rural people and the notation of time suggests that the integration of either region was slightly different. The Hudson Valley entered a time-oriented society beginning in the 1810s while Marion County came into one during the mid-1830s. This is strong evidence for the establishment of the economic frontier along an atmosphere that can be studied by other historians to fully understand the places where time had a stronger grasp over society.

Calvin Fletcher was not the only Hoosier to recognize the significance of time as the transportation revolution touched Marion County. Like the studies conducted by Mark Smith in the antebellum South, Hoosiers in the Early West found an increasing purpose for clocks when reorganizing their economic lives and shows the advancing nature of economic development in Marion County.²³⁶ As noted by various authors, time is an important tool for organizing complex economies, and measuring the emergence of time-consciousness is an effective marker of market orientation.²³⁷ Before 1830, clocks and watches were virtually absent from the town. They were so rare that they were even used as probable identification for maimed bodies. One article in the *Indiana Democrat* from 1831 reported that the *Charleston*, riding down the Wabash River near Vevay, crashed into the *Sylph*, which immediately sunk. James A. Frazier, a resident of

²³⁶ Mark D. Smith, *Mastered by the Clock: Time, Slavery, and Freedom in the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Martin Brueghel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780–1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

²³⁷ One excellent discussion of this is seen in Ian Bartky, *Selling the True Time: Nineteenth-Century Timekeeping in America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). For other examples see, Mark M. Smith, *Mastered by the Clock: Time, Slavery, and Freedom in the American South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997); and Michael O'Malley, *Keeping Watch: A History of American Time* (New York: Viking Publishing, 1990).

Indianapolis, was crushed to death. The newspaper noted that the mangled remains of Frazier's corpse were identified only by "his watch and part of his clothing being found on the deck."²³⁸ That the authorities used his timepiece as a key piece of identifying evidence shows that watches were a relatively rare accompaniment to an outfit or special enough to have engraved, and suggests that Indiana was in a transitional period where watches and clocks were a notable feature of life rather than the norm.

The emergence of a time-conscious society began in the 1830s. Calvin Fletcher transitioned his thought process toward time-consciousness by 1835, and it seems that other Marion County leaders also considered the changing landscape of time-consciousness. On November 7, 1831, the County Commissioners—predicting the surge in clock sales—passed a law stating that "each applicant for License to vend wooden clocks in this County of Marion, shall pay into the County Treasury ten dollars."²³⁹ Clearly, leading Hoosiers found an increasing interest in clocks during the 1830s as the city began to grow and stabilize its relationships with the surrounding region.

Probate records also show an increase in the number of clocks and watches owned by deceased residents. Between 1825 and 1834, only wealthy farmer Jacob Pugh's probate—the first in Marion County—had a clock listed.²⁴⁰ While perhaps residents did not think that watches and clocks were important enough for probate record—which is unlikely, due to the extremely detailed nature of the documents—it is more likely that there was less of a need for time pieces. The nature of the economy was so localized that time-saving, efficiency-oriented institutions were not in place. Residents of the

²³⁸ *Indiana Democrat*, June 18, 1831.

²³⁹ *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 3, Part A 1827-1834* (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Record Survey, 1941).

²⁴⁰ Marion County, Probate Complete Record, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

overwhelmingly rural Marion County were secluded from high-volume trade that required long-distance organization and coordination to maximize efficiency. Using clocks to coordinate travel schedules to increase profit was ineffective because lack of effective roads and other transportation networks made travel from Central Indiana to external markets too irregular to be efficient.

By the mid-1830s, as an expression of their confidence in the impending internal improvement projects, clocks were becoming a regular feature of Hoosier life. The market for watches and clocks increased as evidenced by the emergence of the first watch and clock and shop in the city. The advertisement noted that resident A.F. Morrison will repair various types of clocks and watches and that new watches will be available “at the usual Cincinnati prices.”²⁴¹ By July of 1837, W.H. Talbott’s competing shop opened and began advertising that he and his partners would “sell their stock at unusually low prices.”²⁴² Hoosiers in Marion County, because of the passage of the Big Bill and the related expectation that they would dominate regional trade, created a market for watch shops which confirmed their intent on joining larger economic networks. Local Hoosiers became convinced that Marion County needed to operate on a more formal time-oriented system to reap the benefits of improved transportation.

The timing of Fletcher’s watch acquisition and the emergence of watch and clock shops is significant specifically because it determines the demarcation of the economic frontier during the early decades of the nineteenth century. In New York’s Hudson Valley, Martin Brueghel has noted that clocks were relatively rare before 1810.

²⁴¹ *Indiana Democrat*, December 2, 1834.

²⁴² *Indiana Democrat*, July 12, 1837.

However, “the dissemination of clocks and watches progressed rapidly between 1810 and 1830.”²⁴³ For Brueghel, the emergence of timepieces was necessary because “the development of long-distance trade increased the complexity of scheduling... Timetables represented a step toward increasing predictability and order.”²⁴⁴ For Brueghel, the emergence of clocks mirrored the development of a complex economy. Clocks were the tool by which Americans, for the first time participating in an anonymous economy, could maximize their efficiency. The absence of the transition to capitalism—noted by the low number of clocks and watches—in Indianapolis during the 1820s, when Brueghel’s Hudson Valley was experiencing a massive transition, shows that Indianapolis was still an economic outpost in the first stage of frontier evolution, as defined by Timothy Mahoney. Hoosiers were not an economic hub and were not entrenched in high-volume, long-distance trade, thus they did not require an extraordinary number of clocks.

Marion County Probate Records show a noticeably low number of clocks through the 1820s which suggests that the local economy had not yet developed enough to require the kind of efficiency necessary in the market-oriented Hudson River Valley. In the 1820s, there was no reason for Marion County residents to own anything other than a decorative clock. Marion County Probate Records do not record another clock until 1835. However, a serious change occurred during the 1830s as the probate is increasingly littered with clocks.²⁴⁵ By the mid-1830s, with the expectation of internal

²⁴³ Martin Brueghel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley: 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 85.

²⁴⁴ Martin Brueghel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley: 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 84.

²⁴⁵ Marion County, Probate Complete Record, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

improvement projects connecting the city to the Ohio River trade, residents of Marion County felt that time-keeping devices were solid investments.²⁴⁶

More evidence of the time-conscious frontier is seen in newspapers. Newspaper pages advertised mail schedules and they show an interesting view of the presence of time-consciousness along a boundary determined by environmental and transportation frontiers. Arrival and departure schedules published in the *Indiana Democrat* show that Indianapolis did not function on a time-oriented system while cities nearer to the Ohio River did use time as a stable measurement. In 1830, the schedule noted that the mail “leaves Indianapolis on Monday morning and arrives at Lawrenceburgh [on the Ohio River near Cincinnati] on Tuesday evening; departs next morning 6 o’clock and arrives at Indianapolis on Thursday evening.”²⁴⁷ The article shows that Indianapolis did not have an organized time-infrastructure the way that Lawrenceburgh did, thus, they could not predict exactly what time the mail would arrive. However, Lawrenceburgh, because of its close connection with Cincinnati, needed a stable time infrastructure to manage its economy so it was able to determine that mail carriages would leave at 6 A.M. Ultimately, this shows that in 1830, the border between task and time-oriented societies lay somewhere in southern Indiana, and that Indianapolis lagged behind Ohio River cities when establishing the tools necessary to construct a modern economic network. By 1834, however, the *Indiana Democrat* began using specific times when describing mail routes. A notice from May stated that mail carriers left for “Lawrenceburgh—Monday,

²⁴⁶ Marion County, Probate Complete Record, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

²⁴⁷ *Indiana Democrat*, September 4, 1830. (The article ran until January 15, 1831, and was buttressed by a notice that used specific times, which suggests that Marion County, at this time, was beginning to see the emergence of time orientation.)

Wednesday, 7 o'clock A.M...Madison—Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 3 o'clock A.M.”²⁴⁸ The increasingly specific time shows that Hoosiers were preparing for connections to the market. Although the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill was two years away, discussions over internal improvements were raging across the state. Central Indiana Hoosiers were still catching up to the long-established cities of the Ohio River Valley in terms of developing a time-oriented society. Cities who had easier transportation access to national markets were more likely to adopt temporal structures to maximize profit.²⁴⁹

There is evidence that Hoosiers in Central Indiana were trying to create a time-oriented system as early as 1827. An article in the *Indiana State Journal* described some of the notes on bidding for mail routes to the Hoosier capital and focused on fines for late delivery, amounts of time allowed per stop, and rules for the bidding process. That the *Indiana Democrat* promoted a less time-oriented notation of the mails than the *Indiana State Journal* suggests a social divide in Marion County. The *Indiana State Journal* supported Whiggish tendencies in Marion County. They wished to borrow money for a general system of internal improvements believed that capturing western agricultural commerce would make Marion County an economic behemoth. For them, time organization was a key development that would allow Hoosiers to maximize profits of individual farmers and, thus, pay back the loans they needed to build their internal improvements. Those that followed the Democratic Party and the *Indiana Democrat* were more likely to maintain a social system oriented toward strong local ties and to

²⁴⁸ *Indiana Democrat*, May 31, 1834.

²⁴⁹ For one example of this see, Martin Brueghel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

support a gradual system of improvements and bypassing any debts. They were less inclined to jettison the safety of personal social ties than those who were willing to quickly create time-managed transportation deadlines that were far more susceptible to impersonal economic relationships. Hoosiers, rather than arguing over whether or not to enter the market, stressed over the best way to get crops into the national economy and how to pay for those transportation issues.

The patterns of labor relations in Marion County also showed a lag when compared to other regions. Sean Wilentz has noted that the artisanal system was under attack in New York City early in the 1820s. However, Marion County residents were still advertising openly in newspapers for apprentices. In May 1837, Thomas Donnellan posted an ad stating “Wanted.—A boy 12 or 14 years old of moral and industrious habits, to learn the Cabinet madding business. A good opportunity will be given.”²⁵⁰ While these types of advertisements were rare, the population of the region suggests that the artisanal system was still a viable option for young employees before connections to outside markets gave rise to competitive disadvantages.

At the same time, labor shortages were common. Many people left the city when work was unavailable or when conditions were considered unfair. Conditions were so in favor of laborers that Calvin Fletcher had to pay extra to his farm hands if he wanted them to work without imbibing on the job.²⁵¹ Especially during the Panic of 1837, when employers usually had the upper hand and wage laborers usually took pay cuts to ensure a continuing paycheck, Fletcher bemoaned the work ethic of available laborers. He noted

²⁵⁰ *Indiana Democrat*, 10 May 1837.

²⁵¹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 108-109.

that “At 1 PM went to the farm found that the 4 hands I had [hired] had nearly given out... Laziness is the common complaint of the people of the country—they will not work unless you stand by them... These men were all poor—2 had families & a good name as faithful hands should have been sought as the finest capital to make life agreeable.”²⁵² Fletcher’s complaint about his workers suggests that wage labor was not fully entrenched in Marion County. Residents that chose not to work for wages had other opportunities to make a living for their families and felt comfortable enough to break their agreement with Fletcher to clear his field.²⁵³

The labor market in Marion County was also still driven by exchange of goods and services rather than cash. Few usable account books survive, but that of William Speer is demonstrative of the type of working economy used at the time. He kept a running tab of services provided to Edwin Jones and allowed repayment in bushels of corn. The same account book shows that David Fasett paid for blacksmithing work by providing “one lode plank,” two days of “hauling,” and “two hundred weight of hay.”²⁵⁴ Instead of functioning on a cash-based system, which increasingly occurred in the more complex economies of the Northeast, Marion County farmers were still forced to use a system of exchange that predated consistent needs for specie.²⁵⁵

Other sources show the slow emergence of Indianapolis as an economic outpost. By the time Indianapolis residents began constructing a navigable canal in 1836, newspaper advertisements reflected a maturing economy in the city. Advertisements for

²⁵² Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 112.

²⁵³ See also, Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 84.

²⁵⁴ William Speer Account Book.

²⁵⁵ William Speer Account Book. The difficulty of establishing a routine banking industry is noted in Logan Esarey, *A History of Indiana: From its Exploration to 1850* (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Company), 447-463.

sales of personal property still graced the pages of the *Indiana Journal*. One advertisement from 1835 promoted the sale of a “farm lying on the old Crawfordsville road...containing 320 acres of first rate land, eighty acres under fence...a good brick house, log barn and other convenient out buildings.”²⁵⁶ The significant drop in the number of announcements of personal sales over the previous decade represents a change in the economy of the city. Newspaper advertising became a function of primarily business and governmental agencies. Personal advertisements like those noted above became few and far between because the larger population of the city allowed for public announcements of land sales to flow through the local land office where interested buyers could congregate and purchase any available land instead of being announced in the newspaper.

Advertising for merchant-based commercial goods was the basis of newspaper classified sections. An announcement by two Indianapolis-based hat manufacturers declared that a new hat manufactory opened and that “[t]hey have new on hand and intend to constantly keeping a general assortment of [drabs, hats and caps] all of which they will sell [w]holesale or [r]etail to suit purchasers.”²⁵⁷ Another ad placed by Indianapolis shoemaker and merchant, a Mr. E. Depew, stated that the proprietor “respectfully informs the citizens of Indianapolis and the surrounding country that he has new and intends keeping constantly on hand a full assortment of [ladies and gentelmen’s] [e]astern and [s]hop made [b]oots, &c. consisting of all varieties of the most approved

²⁵⁶ *Indiana Journal*, January 6, 1835.

²⁵⁷ *Indiana Journal*, January 2, 1835.

fashions.”²⁵⁸ An additional notice states that Charles Martens opened a store for “Fresh Groceries and Liquor” from which “country dealers may find it to their advantage to purchase goods of him.”²⁵⁹ A final announcement placed by merchant E.T. Porter in the *Journal* stated that “[i]n addition to the present extensive stock, [Porter] is about receiving a select assortment of [f]all and [w]inter goods,” and that “[e]very effort shall be made to accommodate customers, as regards *price* and *quality* of goods.”²⁶⁰ The high numbers of advertisements focusing on consumer goods reflects the maturation of the city economy. Advertisements in the 1830s reflect a trend toward the solid establishment of overland economic ties with cities on the Ohio River in the emerging city even though the city was not connected to eastern markets by river or rail.

The large number of specifically commercial advertisements overshadowed those who operated in both the public and private spheres. In 1835, an advertisement in the *Journal* pronounced that “Mrs. Irwin & [d]aughters [respectfully inform] their friends and the public that they continue to carr[y] on as usual [millinery and plain sewing] in all their varieties...They are prepared to accommodate several [boarders].”²⁶¹ Another advertisement announced the effect of a personal matter on commercial interests. Gideon Johnson placed an advertisement warning “against trading with my wife Delilah, as I shall not be accountable for any of her contracts, as we have made a final separation and division of our property.”²⁶² Likewise, an announcement in the *Journal* put out an

²⁵⁸ *Indiana Journal*, January 6, 1835.

²⁵⁹ *Indiana Journal*, January 4, 1837.

²⁶⁰ *Indiana Journal*, January 4, 1837.

²⁶¹ *Indiana Journal*, October 31, 1834.

²⁶² *Indiana Journal*, April 15, 1837.

advertisement in order to settle accounts around the city because “[o]ne of the firm of T.M. Smith & Co. will [move] east.”²⁶³ The *Indiana Journal* was clearly still a place to air personal information in the 1830s but residents felt comfortable explaining commercial interests and their relationship to personal events in a public venue. As the city matured from a frontier to an outpost, community announcement were less important in newspapers than the economic advertisements that graced the pages.

Government announcements for local contracts also transformed during the canal era as the city stabilized during the 1830s. Government advertising announced municipal ordinances and business or took the form of lawsuits. One publication announced new ordinances “to [r]egulate the[l]icensing of [g]roceries and [t]ippling [h]ouses in the Town of Indianapolis, and for other purposes.”²⁶⁴ Others offered potential contracts to carpenters, painters and bridge builders to the lowest bidder. One advertisement requested “[s]ealed [p]roposals...for shelving and finishing the rooms in the library of the State capitol.”²⁶⁵ Another called for “[s]ealed proposals for the construction for the... [b]ridge over the Eel river at the north end of Bridge Street at Logansport.”²⁶⁶ Legal announcements regarding summonses riddle the classified section of the *Indiana Journal* and suggest the stabilizing development of a legal culture in the city. The transformation of governmental advertisements in the *Journal* implies that the city government structure stabilized in the decade after 1835. No longer did government officials have to worry about heating the Statehouse during congressional sessions. Instead, they could focus on

²⁶³ *Indiana Journal*, January 4, 1837.

²⁶⁴ *Indiana Journal*, April 15, 1837.

²⁶⁵ *Indiana Journal*, March 18, 1837.

²⁶⁶ *Indiana Journal*, March 11, 1837.

refining cultural institutions like libraries or regulating social and commercial institutions.

The development of a stable society in Marion County allowed an increasing number of commercial merchants to pay cash when seeking goods. One announcement declared that two merchants “will pay [fifty-six] and one fourth cents [in cash] for good merchantable [w]heat.”²⁶⁷ Another ad, published months later, by William Wernwag proclaimed that the local brewery needed “400 BUSHELS of good sound oats, for which cash will be paid at the rate of 25 cents per bushel.” The ad continued by stating the need for “200 bushels of good merchantable [barley], for which cash will be paid at the rate of 43 cents per bushel.”²⁶⁸ Another advertisement, placed by a wholesaler looking to attract merchants’ business noted that they “are now receiving their spring supplies...which will be sold as low as at any rate west of the mountains, for cash or approved paper.”²⁶⁹ These advertisements in classified sections of the *Indiana Journal* reflected a growing change in the nature of the economy of Indianapolis. Calls by merchants for rural residents to bring their goods in exchange for cash increased reflected the emergence of the city as an economic outpost. Merchants were in an economic borderland between the cash-based economies of Cincinnati, Louisville or New Orleans, while, at the same time, goods were still frequently exchanged in-kind among residents buying consumer goods including dry goods and fall or winter goods.

As the city emerged as an economic outpost for the surrounding communities, however, it was still secluded from most of the economic activity of the Early West. As a

²⁶⁷ *Indiana Journal*, January 2, 1835.

²⁶⁸ *Indiana Journal*, March 20, 1835.

²⁶⁹ *Indiana Journal*, April 22, 1837.

result, Marion County residents were forced to adapt to a situation without strong banking or cash-oriented commercial instruments. The strongest evidence for this is the high number of merchants who still accepted in-kind payments. An advertisement from Anderson, Bell and Co. notes that the wholesalers “will receive [g]inseng, [b]eeswax, [t]ow and [f]lax [l]inen, and [r]ags in exchange for goods.”²⁷⁰ John Jamison, a prominent businessman and merchant, published that “[c]ountry produce will be taken in exchange for goods at the market price” in his new dry goods store.²⁷¹ At the same time, an ad noted that accounts at T.S. Smith and Co. could be settled with “cash or approved country produce.”²⁷² Likewise, E.T. Porter stated that “[c]ountry produce, such as [j]anes, [l]insey, [l]inen, [s]ugar, [b]eeswax, [s]ocks... will be received in exchange for goods.”²⁷³ An advertisement for flax seed showed the availability of in-kind payment by stating “[t]he subscribers will pay the highest price for 3000 [bushels flax-seed] delivered at their [d]rug [s]tore... Flax seed [o]il will also be given in exchange at a fair rate.”²⁷⁴

Central Indiana lagged far behind the social changes occurring in other parts of the United States at the outset of 1837. After nearly two decades of settlement, they still lacked a stable system of cash-based trade and labor markets, and only occasionally used time as a consistent measurement. Manufactories were absent from the community, and labor organizations were also non-existent. The vast majority of people were farmers who traded for goods or dealt in specie rather than dealing with paper money, and most products were either expensively imported or done without. However, Hoosier hopes of

²⁷⁰ *Indiana Journal*, June 12, 1835.

²⁷¹ *Indiana Journal*, January 4, 1837.

²⁷² *Indiana Journal*, January 4, 1837.

²⁷³ *Indiana Journal*, January 4, 1837.

²⁷⁴ *Indiana Journal*, August 14, 1836.

a commercial empire that would intensify trade in the city got a boost in the winter of 1836 with the announcement of the Big Bill. After construction, Hoosiers would be able to boast of their state as the center of the northwest trade network by linking the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico in one water-based transportation system. Unfortunately, Hoosiers experienced the troubles of wide-reaching economic networks rather than getting the long sought-after benefits as the Panic of 1837 descended upon the nation.

CHAPTER 5: “THE PRESENT APPROACHING CRISIS: THE PANIC OF 1837 AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN MARION COUNTY, 1837-1843”

The first rumblings of economic distress reached Hoosiers in May of 1837. On account of the “great pressure in N.Y. & Philadelphia,” Calvin Fletcher, on Saturday, May 13, 1837, called a meeting of Indianapolis’ main merchants including E.T. Porter, Alexander Russell, Henry Bradley, James M. Ray, James Blake, Nicholas McCarty, and William Hannaman. Gathering at McCarty’s counting room, these men surveyed the financial situation of the West and agreed to “not to do any injustice to any of their Eastern creditors but to pay them all an equal portion as it becomes due & especially to pay the [State Bank of Indiana] as fast as any other creditor—have determined to make no noise in their home collections—to resist bills drawn on them by Eastern merchants without a previous agreement so to do & to pay no one more than an equal portion of their debts to the injury of any other creditor.” The urgency of the meeting stemmed from “an idea [in the East] that there are abundant means in the West” and that “the moment a debt is due the note is presented here to drawn for.” Fletcher, although noting that merchants in Indianapolis all had adequate means to pay their bills, stated that local vendors were behind “on consequence of their indulgence to their customers.”²⁷⁵ On Monday, May 15, Fletcher and his compatriots met again “to take into consideration the presant approaching crisis” and “agreed for the present not to pay only an equal proportion to their Eastern creditors, to sustain the Bank in case of pressure &c & to meet Every Wed. at 4 at the same time & place.”²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 426-427.

²⁷⁶ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 427-428.

Two days later, Fletcher arrived at the “Bank board of State Directors... We all met with feelings of no ordinary concern for the institution over which we were placed.” The concern felt by the board emanated from the failure of a “deposit Bank at Buffalo—other deposit Banks at the South Mississippi & Louisiana...our Bank has 12 hundred thousand dollars in these deposit Banks out of the state & others.” Fletcher continued to fret that “the daily news from the Eastern cities & from Europe would indicate that the fountains of the great deep in the commercial world are about to break up. What are we to do is the enquiry from every one?”²⁷⁷ The next day, Samuel Merrill broke into a meeting between Fletcher and James M. Ray with “his hands full of letters he had just received by 2 messengers one from Lawrenceburgh & one from the Madison branches stating that all the Banks in the Eastern cities together with the Cincinnati banks had suspended payment.”²⁷⁸ Fletcher somberly reported that the board of the State Bank was reconvened and also invited the Governor and the State Treasurer to determine the course of action. “The question presented in a solemn manner by our President was what shall the Board do—Let our specie be drawn out by Banks that owe us when they have closed their doors?...After a most solemn deliberation in which the Governor & Treasurer both took part we agreed to permit each branch to suspend if it thought best...This occurrence was sudden as it was unexpected by most. I had feared this calamity for some time yet the shape it appeared was different from what I expected.”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 428

²⁷⁸ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 429.

²⁷⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 429.

The actions of May 18, 1837, kept the board together until nearly midnight and the aftermath was in doubt. Fletcher noted that the board met the next morning, Friday, May 19, and grimly stated that “our board met again this morning with some little doubts as to what had transpired the night before but on a review all were satisfied that the best had been done & flattered themselves that it was but a temporary suspension which would not last but a few months at most.”²⁸⁰ Fletcher’s negative mood regarding the suspension of specie payments of the State Bank of Indiana was more accurate than that of his compatriots. The Panic of 1837 was very rough on Indiana, as the state strained to complete its internal improvements projects and manage the state’s debts to eastern creditors. Central Indiana was especially hard hit as financing of the Central Canal disrupted the regions efforts to become the central economic hub of the Early West. Historians like Logan Esarey, Donald Carmony, and James Madison have described this period in Hoosier history, but a detailed description of the Panic of 1837 in Marion County evades the historiography.²⁸¹ This chapter examines the ground level effects of the Panic of 1837 on Marion County residents to examine how westerners experienced financial collapse during the early stages of growth.

As noted above, the meeting amongst the leading men of Indianapolis was the first major moment of economic turmoil in the long depression that followed the collapse of land prices. However, Fletcher confided in his diary on April 28 that “Our collections

²⁸⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 430.

²⁸¹ Logan Esarey, *State Banking in Indiana: 1814-1873* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1912); Logan Esarey, *History of Indiana from its Exploration to 1922* (Dayton: Dayton Historical Society, 1922); Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1860: The Pioneer Era* (Bloomington: Indiana Historical Society, 1998); James Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); James Madison, *Hoosiers: A New History of Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

from the East seem to be good—too large I fear—augurs bad for the future.”²⁸² His ominous comment regarding the economic future of local Hoosiers foreshadowed the difficulty of the state and region in the following years. From 1837 through the mid-1840s, Hoosiers in central Indiana experienced the Panic of 1837 in microcosm, as the economic dreams of the state hinged on connecting the fertile lands of the capital city to the rest of the national economy. The fortunes of the city followed those of the state, as the debt acquired for the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill bound all regions of the state together under the obligation of repayment for a general system of improvements. Unfortunately, the burdens of the Big Bill were too much to bear because of poor governmental oversight, fiscal irresponsibility, and a lack of economic realism by all involved.

The fiscal crisis of the Panic of 1837 is well documented. Land speculation in the trans-Appalachian western United States caused a spike in prices and interest rates for loans. Banking houses in Europe profligately loaned money to investors to buy land and slaves which furthered the crisis. The redistribution of surpluses from federal land sales to the states supported the speculative trend as states would have extra funds to complete internal improvement projects, further increasing the value of land. Jackson’s Specie Circular, issued in 1836 in order to prevent speculation and the possibility of a bust by demanding that land purchases be made in hard currency, had the opposite effect by creating a vulnerability in the banking system that was unknowingly triggered by the increase in British interest rates. As noted by Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, “the U.S.

²⁸² Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 422.

financial system was the helpless victim of rapid shifts in the demand for specie at home and abroad.”²⁸³

The panic hurt Indiana because of its internal improvement loans. As briefly mentioned in the preceding chapter, the Hoosier legislature authorized a \$10 million loan at five percent for twenty years in order to finance its projects. Poor choices are often defended because the future is unpredictable, but the state legislature did not even cursorily examine the tea leaves before they passed the Big Bill. As Paul Fatout bluntly states, “Indiana’s contribution to irrationality [of the internal improvements craze] was a system plan that could not survive the test of hard sense. The ultimate cost of the projected works was certain to be much higher than the appropriation of \$10 million. Available to the assembly at the time were reports of engineers who figured the total at \$16 million. Adding the expense of overhead, wastage, superintendence, and a possible rise in wages meant an increase to probably more than \$20 million.” In addition, he reminds readers that “unpredictable nature could play havoc with tide estimates when floods crumbled new canal banks, swept away bridges, and destroyed aqueducts. The appropriations were too tight to allow leeway for contingencies.”²⁸⁴ In fact, tensions with nature were a constant factor in the construction of Indiana canal projects. Muskrats

²⁸³ Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, *A New Economic View of American History from Colonial times to 1940* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 101; for other examples of how the Panic of 1837 emerged, see John Lauritz Larson, *The Market Revolution in America: Liberty, Ambition, and the Eclipse of the Common Good* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 92-97; Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 217-224; John Joseph Wallis, “The Depression of 1839 to 1843: States, Debts, and Banks,” <http://www.ltadvisors.net/Info/research/1839depression.pdf>, retrieved May 16, 2016; an older interpretation blaming Jackson’s Specie Circular is found in Peter Temin, *The Jacksonian Economy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969).

²⁸⁴ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals*, (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 77. Fatout’s book is the most comprehensive resource detailing the rise and fall of the Canal Era in Indiana.

were ever-present in the Central Canal and were extremely destructive to the budget and function of the project. “An energetic muskrat would dig a hole through the bank, and, unless the opening was very quickly discovered, that was an end of the canal for weeks. The company paid a bounty on muskrat scalps for years, on this account, and it never made a more profitable investment.”²⁸⁵

The serious problem facing Hoosiers was the weight of the loans. The five percent interest rate due biennially on January 1 and July 1 each year was \$500,000. Meanwhile, the state received only one tenth of that sum in tax revenue on an annual basis. As Fatout notes, “the annual interest on a loan of \$10 million at 5 percent was \$500,000, which was ten times the state revenue from taxation, yet the system bill provided no means of paying the interest. Expectations of great profits from public works ignored costly years of construction when the works would be only liabilities earning nothing.” For Hoosiers, the overly rosy suppositions that undergirded the loan drove them into a mindless frenzy regarding planning for repayment of the loans.

The early events of the Panic of 1837 exacerbated the weakness of the Indiana internal improvements finance system. By the end of that year, the public debt was nearly \$5 million and the tax receipts only \$190,000. The general system of improvements left a series of unfinished projects that were incomplete and costing the state money through interest payments. The money needed to run the government left a debt on interest of nearly \$50,000. At the legislative session of 1837-38, outgoing Governor Noble, who initiated the works, argued that they should continue on with the most important and immediately profitable projects. The legislature, quickly realizing

²⁸⁵ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 20.

their miscalculations, were in the unenviable position of having to restructure the system so that they could pay their debts without raising taxes. The politicians passed a budget in 1838 that allowed fund commissioners in New York City to acquire even more debt in order to complete all the works at once. Dr. Coe sold state securities to the Staten Island Whaling Company, the Bank of Western New York, the Bank of Erie County, and, again, the Morris Canal Company.²⁸⁶ These loans, conceived to get the state through its deficit, were atrocious contracts. According to one telling of the story, “the railroad was a fly-by-night, the banks were wildcat outfits, and the whaling company was a rickety concern about to fall apart. The Morris Company bought bonds without paying for them, sold them, then used the proceeds to prop up its various tottering enterprises.”²⁸⁷

By the end of 1838, the state was on the road to outright financial ruin. Governor Wallace, noted in an address to the legislature that “it would be folly to conceal it—we have our hands full...to preserve the credit and character of the state unimpaired.”²⁸⁸ However, his optimism came through when “by a feat of mental or mathematical gymnastics, that Indiana finances were in flourishing health. Citing the probable income from taxes, from 90,000 acres between Fort Wayne and Logansport at ten dollars an acre, from 294,624 acres between the Tippecanoe River and Terre Haute at six dollars an acre [and other sources] he got a total of \$4,383,623... ‘Here is a clear unencumbered capital of at least four millions of dollars.’”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 89.

²⁸⁷ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 89.

²⁸⁸ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 92.

²⁸⁹ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 92.

The 1838-39 session of the legislature finally realized its folly in loaning out relatively substantial amounts of money. There was a dramatic change in fiscal strategy to deal with the shortages of money coming into state coffers while outflows remained high. In order to save money, the legislature cut the six members of the board of commissioners and the three canal commissioners down to a three person board elected by both houses. In addition, the legislature limited expenditures to \$1,500,000 annually, which forced classification of projects. Board members apportioned their allotment among five projects. The Wabash and Erie, long the focus of improvers, got \$279,000. The Central Canal got \$389,000, the Whitewater acquired \$274,000, the Erie-Michigan received \$100,000, and \$70,000 went to the Cross-Cut Canal. Objections raged from parts of the state that would lose out on immediate funding; however, the projects that received money moved along and by the end of 1839, the Whitewater Canal produced its first profits.²⁹⁰

The first profits from the Whitewater Canal were not enough to support the increasingly bloated interest on the debt. In 1839, only forty-five miles of the Central Canal were completed, an unimpressive number for two years of profligate spending on work. Indeed, the only section that held water was the eight-mile tract between Indianapolis and Broad Ripple just north of the capital. The Whitewater Canal was in operation from Brookville to Lawrenceburg, and the Wabash and Erie Canal was functioning across ninety miles of sparsely populated north central Indiana but managed to make a small profit. Overall, the lack of concentration on important projects during

²⁹⁰ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 93-94.

the early stages of the internal improvements era prevented the major projects from moving further along.²⁹¹

The year 1839, as noted above, was a turning point in legislative purpose regarding canal expenditures and construction. It was also a turning point in the way that projects were financed. In order to raise money to increase state revenue, the legislature allowed private companies to lease the valuable water power on completed parts of canals. In Marion County, “on the 11th of June [1839] the State leased power to one Woollen Mill two Cotton Mills two Paper Mills an Oil mill and two Grist and two Saw mills an addition of ten mills and a business that could not but be a very material help to the town.” The lease of water power to these companies was derived to help with the massive debt the state had accumulated, but they were little help. “The canal was not as efficient as expected. It had too little fall for a race and it was grievously obstructed by an annual growth of grass which was only imperfectly cleared out at the expense of some money and turning off the water for a week or two.” When the water was turned off in order to clear the brush, the companies “refused to pay their rent. Suits were defeated by evidence showing constant loss from the failure of the State to supply water according to the contract. It is doubtful if the rent paid in the ten years that the State retained the canal would cover the costs of her suits against the lessees.”²⁹²

1839 also saw a change in loan acquisition strategy as new fund commissioners were appointed. Milton Stapp and Lucius Scott were placed in charge of acquiring loans for the state in order to complete its public works projects. Scott acquired a loan of

²⁹¹ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 94.

²⁹² Holloway, William. *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870), 68.

\$600,000 for the state, and Stapp negotiated for \$1.2 million, some from the Morris Canal Company. As a result of these loans, the debt of Indiana on the eve of 1840 was a total debt of \$10,064,000 and an interest payment of \$479,000.²⁹³

The real stress for state finances also began in 1839. While the Panic of 1837 affected the entire nation, the real aftershocks began hitting the Early West as the Morris Canal Company declared bankruptcy. John Joseph Wallis notes that “The cessation of canal and railroad construction in these states was not caused by a restriction in the flow of international capital, but initially by the collapse of one American bank, the Morris Canal and Banking Company of New Jersey.”²⁹⁴ After fulfilling the interest payment on the state debt on July 1, 1839, Hoosiers began worrying how to pay the upcoming installment at the outset of the New Year. News worsened in August when the Morris Canal Company announced that it was unable to fulfill its contracts, owing Indiana \$2,536,611. Shortly after, the Detroit and Pontiac Railroad and the Bank of Western New York both closed their doors, owing the state a combined \$330,000. In all, the suspended or lost debt eclipsed four million dollars.

The results of the projects were, at best, meager. As news of the collapse of the Morris Company spread, work on Indiana projects stopped. Fatout notes that “momentum kept operations going a few weeks longer, like a spinning top slowing down.” The board of internal improvements, in the face of the failing economy, ordered that all works other than the Wabash and Erie Canal and a few minor structures on the Whitewater Canal be stopped immediately. In all, years of work on the projects and eight

²⁹³ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 96, 97.

²⁹⁴ John Joseph Wallis, “The Depression of 1839 to 1843: States, Debts, and Banks,” <http://www.ltadvisors.net/Info/research/1839depression.pdf>, retrieved May 16, 2016.

million dollars of expenditures returned completed projects totaling one hundred twenty-nine miles of canal, twenty-eight miles of railroad, and forty-one miles of macadamized turnpikes. Left unfinished were two hundred-ninety miles of partially completed works that “were a dreary spectacle of torn earth being overgrown by weeds and eroded by rain.”²⁹⁵ The inability of the state to acquire extra funds also led the legislature to question what to do with the unfinished works. In order to “ameliorate the burdens of taxation” to their citizens, the legislature suggested that private enterprises should be able to work on the projects in return for state bonds.²⁹⁶

By 1841, the question of paying interest on the debt emerged paramount. In July of 1841, the state debt was \$13,667,433. In order to pay the debt, the state government approved the sale of bonds at seven percent interest and raising property taxes. These measures, however, were ineffective as no one bought the bonds and the tax increase was overwhelmingly paid in state scrip that was useless for payments to external creditors. Governor Noah Noble, in his quest to acquire money to pay the interest on the debt, found that he could not sell state bonds under any circumstances in the spring of 1841. When the payment came due on July 1, Noble stated that he could not pay and offered payments to creditors in seven percent state bonds, which no one accepted.²⁹⁷

By the fall of 1841, investors demanded repayment and were openly hostile to the Hoosier plight. The *London Morning Herald* decried “the plundering vagabonds of India-Scampia,” and argued that “Indiana mocks all the obligations of good faith and

²⁹⁵ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 98.

²⁹⁶ Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 222.

²⁹⁷ Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 228-229.

common honesty.”²⁹⁸ The abuse was to no avail as Indiana finally wrung its last dollars from its creditors. The state was unable to access any more money and quietly absorbed the tirades pointed at it. By 1842, including the missed interest payment, the total debt was \$15,088,146. The annual interest ballooned to \$615,000 while the treasury could only assemble \$56,000 in assets.²⁹⁹ The state would not make another payment on its debt for five years as Charles Butler negotiated on behalf of eastern bondholders to repay the debt. The result of the negotiation gave Hoosiers respite from the massive debt they incurred over the course of the previous decade. After two years of intense negotiation between bondholders and the state legislature, it was decided that the state would pay half of its debt and interest thereupon, while the other half of the debt would come from the receipts of the Wabash and Erie Canal which would go directly to bondholders.³⁰⁰ Only after the Butler Bill of 1847, which created terms of repayment favorable to the frontier economy, could the Hoosier government build the infrastructure necessary to begin repaying the loans acquired over the previous decade.³⁰¹

The failure of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill left Indiana paralyzed. The state owed massive interest payments on debts. After the financial ruin of the state was plain, the legislature appointed committees to investigate the various loans and project expenditures in order to understand their plight. Of the twenty-four people investigated by the legislature, thirteen were proclaimed innocent of any wrongdoing.

²⁹⁸ Reprinted from, Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 106.

²⁹⁹ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 106.

³⁰⁰ Margaret Duden, "Internal Improvements In Indiana, 1818–1846" *Indiana Magazine of History* 5 (1909): 169.

³⁰¹ Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 228; for a discussion of repayment, see Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 299-321.

Various other officials were reprimanded by the state for exceeding their authority or negligence. The state sued Milton Stapp for \$107,187 after noting that Stapp's work was foolish and ill-conceived. The investigation committee noted that "his complicated negotiations with Sherwood, Danforth, Dodge, Robinson and others...are facts too glaring to be denied, to grossly wrong to admit of palliation, and to palpably indefensible to invite attack." Stapp, the committee implied, was too stupid to notice getting swindled. In the end, after credits were applied to his account with the state, Stapp repaid \$27,175 to settle his debt with the state.³⁰²

The most shocking case centered on Dr. Isaac Coe. He, as an original fund commissioner, was there for the most important loans to the Morris Canal Company. An examination by the state found that not only was he selling bonds to the Morris Company, but that he was also a large stake-holder in the business. Coe profited immensely from selling the state bonds to companies in which he was a shareholder. Accused of improperly disposing of state funds, Coe called on Calvin Fletcher to defend him in court. Fletcher, in his diary, noted that "This day learned that Dr. Coe would be very much exposed in relation to his *actings* as fund commissioner."³⁰³ Samuel Merrill, in a letter to his brother, noted that Dr. Coe "no one pretends that he has not done very wrong, and generally he is considered as dishonest and corrupt....I may escape in that case by technicalities."³⁰⁴

On the surface, it seems strange that Dr. Coe's case would draw the sympathy of two of the city's most prominent leaders. Coe had personally benefitted from his

³⁰² Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 107.

³⁰³ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 382.

³⁰⁴ Merrill Family Papers, Indiana Historical Society Library.

handling of state bonds and brought the city and state to the threshold of ruin but was still able to acquire the services of the city's most prominent attorneys and citizens. This is only explained by the fact that Fletcher, Merrill, Hervey Bates, James M. Ray, Nicholas McCarty, James Blake, and Caleb Scudder all signed bonds backing Coe when he was appointed as a fund commissioner.³⁰⁵ The result was that they would all be held fiscally liable for the financial duplicitousness of Coe. Fletcher's help emerged from the reality that he would be financially ruined if Coe's securities were held liable for the doctor's impropriety. On July 3, 1840, he noted that "I have this day been looking into my liabilities in consequence of my being on Dr. Coes bond as Fund Commissioner...If [States Bonds unpaid for] are liable on a security it must produce the insolvency of myself as well as other securities."³⁰⁶ According to Fletcher, on January 25, 1842, "Coe called & wished to retain us for himself & his securities in the event of a suit on his bond." Fletcher, wishing to protect his own financial assets, accepted the case on behalf of him and his partners Ovid Butler and Simon Yandes.³⁰⁷ Fletcher's help allowed Coe to escape any punishment regarding his improper handling of state funds. By 1847, all charges were dropped or dismissed and he escaped with hundreds of thousands of ill-gotten dollars.³⁰⁸

The Panic of 1837 was devastating to the state, but it was equally devastating to individuals in Marion County. The bursting bubble and the resulting demand for

³⁰⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 382-383.

³⁰⁶ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 197-198.

³⁰⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 383.

³⁰⁸ Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 107.

payment in gold and silver specie crushed the local economy and kept prices low for nearly half a decade. Land and goods sales show just how strapped the region was for hard currency. An advertisement in the *Indiana Democrat* from December 27, 1839, stated that “The undersigned will sell cheap a valuable tract of land situated on the Leavenworth road, eight miles south of Indianapolis. The tract contains eighty acres, twenty improved and eighteen cleared...The above tract of land will be sold for twelve hundred dollars down. No credit will be given.” The land, sold by Joseph Speer, was barely two miles from the Central Canal and the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad.³⁰⁹ Speer’s inability to give credit shows exactly the kind of hard times that were pressing upon Marion County during the winter of 1839-40. Another land sale in the *Democrat* noted that the “real estate belonging to Joseph Bonman and the heirs of John Ellos, deceased...will be sold to the highest bidder by the undersigned, as commissioner appointed for the purpose, in pursuance and by virtue of a decree of the Marion Circuit Court. Term of sale one third of the purchase money in hand, one third in six and the remaining third in twelve months from day of sale. Good title made in final payment.”³¹⁰ The advertisement in the *Democrat* suggests that the sellers were trying to get any money possible out of their land by providing credit on a small scale. Another strategy used to acquire money was to provide discounts to buyers. An ad in the *Indiana Democrat* noted that “To meet the exigency of the times and to facilitate the system upon which we will hereafter transact business, we have this day made a general reduction of every article in

³⁰⁹ *Indiana Democrat*, December 27, 1839.

³¹⁰ *Indiana Democrat*, December 27, 1839.

our line—a reduction of twenty percent below our former prices, for cash, and for cash only will we sell.”³¹¹

Sheriff’s sales were also common occurrences in Marion County during the depression following the Panic. In 1835-36, the Marion County sheriff dealt with land sale settlements for roughly half of his official acts. After 1837, the order books are overwhelmed with notes for property sales for debt. Connor Vickers sold land on behalf of plaintiffs on a regular basis during the deepest years of the crisis. Martin Bush sued his brother Simon Bush and David Kime, from which “returned January 13, 1840, came to hand October 30th 1839 by virtue of the same I have made \$218.50 and now file the plaintiffs a receipt for \$130.00.” Stoughton Fletcher, Calvin Fletcher’s son, sued William Schofield in 1842 and “Returned this execution to plaintiffs...for one hundred forty nine dollars and 14 cents.” While most suits were settled, not all suits were able to cover debts. In 1839, Lucius Barbar sued agricultural reformer Solon Robinson but the sheriff “returned October 14, 1839...and I have found no property wherever to levy this wit.”³¹²

The financial struggles shown in the Execution Books are reflected in newspaper advertisements. The *Indiana Democrat* issue from December 27, 1839, placed an article stating “By virtue of an execution to me directed from the Clerk’s office of the Marion Circuit Court, I will expose to public sale to the highest bidder on Saturday the 4th day of January next, in front of the Washington Hall, in Indianapolis, at 2 o’clock. M. on said day, the rent and profits for seven years, of lot No. 3, in square No. 61 in the town of Indianapolis, and on failing to realize the full amount demanded by said execution,

³¹¹ *Indiana Democrat*, August 22, 1838.

³¹² Marion County Circuit Court Execution Docket, Book B. Indiana Archives and Records Administration, Indianapolis, Indiana.

damages and costs, I will at the same time and place, expose the fee simple of said lot executed as the property of Jonathan Eakle, a the suit of Joshua C. Oliver against said Eakle and Chas. C. Campbell.”³¹³ In January of 1841, a sheriff’s sale put up Nathaniel Cox’s town lot in Indianapolis to pay debts to A.W. & J.D. Morris and Morris , Haselett & Co.³¹⁴ The August 18, 1841, issue of the *Indiana Journal* listed eight land sales from all over the county. John Carnahan’s land was sold “on failure to realize the full amount demanded by said execution with damages and costs...at the suit of the State of Indiana.” Some suits were brought by individuals against each other. Lewis Lewis’ town lot number ten in square forty was sold on suit by Priscilla Allen.³¹⁵

Land sales at public auction were a common site in early 1840 when the depression was at its worst. An April 18, 1840, notice in the *Indiana Journal* announced sales of land for failure to pay interest on their loans. The notice, which ran one and a half columns, listed properties across the state and included local failures. Local resident Harry Perry’s town lots ten and eleven in section 50 were put up for sale to pay off his \$200 mortgage. Land just outside of Indianapolis city limits mortgaged by Benjamin Crothers was put up to cover his \$500 owed to the state. Thomas Thomas’ thirty-five acres of land was put up to cover his \$200 debt.³¹⁶

Insolvent probates were also prominent features of local newspapers requesting that creditors come forward to put in their claims in order to settle the account. The January session of the Marion County Probate Court in 1841 listed several insolvent

³¹³ *Indiana Democrat*, December 27, 1839.

³¹⁴ *Indiana Journal*, January 26, 1841.

³¹⁵ *Indiana Journal*, August 18, 1841.

³¹⁶ *Indiana Journal*, April 18, 1840.

probates including those of Jacob Roop and Samuel Parker.³¹⁷ Roop's probate eventually went through the probate court in order to settle debts. In his instance, his estate—which listed a clock, an unknown number of horses, twenty-six shoats and one sow—was not enough to cover his debts. As a result, his debtors got barely a third of what they were owed. David Boyd received only \$.59 of the \$1.50 he was owed, Jacob Miller was due \$21.33 and got \$8.49, and George Heiser was owed \$108.96 and got \$43.45. Nicholas McCarty was owed \$86.70 and got \$35.16 back.³¹⁸ Probates also show that the economy was still struggling to recover from depressed prices. The estate of Thomas McClintock, settled in August of 1841, shows that buyers purchased his goods at prices roughly twenty-five to thirty percent below their appraised value. His stallion mare was appraised at \$200 but only sold for \$150, his bay mare sold for \$40 but was appraised at \$60. The estate sale for James Harton shows a similar difficulty. His mare was appraised at \$30 in 1839 but sold for only \$17 in 1841 when the probate sale occurred.³¹⁹ Henry Mundy's estate shows that a milking cow appraised at \$14 only sold for \$12. William Hobson's kiln, appraised at \$200, only sold for \$120. In a comment in his diary, Calvin Fletcher noted that in March of 1840 "I have looked with concern to the great pressure which pervades our land at present. The change has been sudden & tremendous. One year ago a cow was ready sale at \$15 or \$20—wheat \$1. a \$1.25. Now money cannot be got for either."³²⁰ Ultimately, what these prices show is a remarkable similarity with the rest of the United States regarding the overall effect on prices. Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell

³¹⁷ *Indiana Journal*, February 27, 1841.

³¹⁸ Marion County, Probate Complete Record, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

³¹⁹ Marion County, Probate Complete Record, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

³²⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 160.

have argued that the “financial crisis that began in 1837 was extremely severe. The money supply fell by 34% from 1838 to 1842. Prices fell by 33 percent from 1839 to 1843.” These numbers fit in directly with the experience of Marion County and suggest that while the local economy was not completely connected to the rest of the national and international economy in terms of circulation of cash, it experienced the same kinds of depressed prices felt in other regions.³²¹

Obviously, not all probates were insolvent in Marion County. William Holmes had a large probate that listed a remainder of \$1479.76 to be distributed to his six heirs, but even he took severe losses due to the Panic of 1837. Holmes’ bay mare was appraised at \$100 but only sold for \$86. His cows and pigs sold at a considerable profit—one of the few noted in the record. The cow, valued at \$15, sold for \$26.75, and the hogs were appraised at \$10 but sell for \$20.18 ³/₄. Homer Brooks’ probate listed that he owned sixty-six shares of State Bank of Indiana stock worth \$2679.50. While Holmes and Brooks’ probates left them with a lot of money, the probate of David Murdock, a local canal contractor who owned a significant number of wagons and yokes of oxen, is more representative of how the Panic affected residents of central Indiana. It showed that he died with \$7.41 to distribute to his heirs. Ultimately, these probates show that all classes of people were affected by the Panic.³²²

There is also a bit of money lending between individuals at the local level. The aforementioned William Holmes took out a loan from Philip K. Landis on August 30, 1836, for \$1,000 at ten percent interest over ten years. Holmes, hoping for the

³²¹ Jeremy Atack and Peter Passel, *A New Economic View of American History from Colonial Times to 1940* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 102.

³²² Marion County, Probate Complete Record, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

completion of internal improvements projects, presumably took out the loan to increase his ability to benefit from the lowered cost of transportation to external markets via the Central Canal. He would almost certainly have taken the money to hire hands and buy improved implements in order to increase his ability to export his crops.³²³ Holmes was not the only Hoosier to take out loans from local lenders to buy land. Hugh O'Neal borrowed one hundred dollars cash from Calvin Fletcher and another note of one hundred dollars on credit "which he will return when able."³²⁴ As the panic tightened its grip on the region, Hoosier debtors found it more difficult to meet the financial responsibilities they accumulated over the previous years. Especially after the failure of the internal improvements projects, things got even more difficult as prices dropped and transportation prices remained high.

The Panic was also difficult for stores in the region. Stresses and closures were reported in newspapers as the credit crunch landed on merchants unable to pay their dealers, thus forcing them to eliminate sales on credit, which was the only way that the frontier economy could function. In one example, W.A. Sangers & Brothers, a grocery store and liquor dealer, advertised that "to meet the exigency of the times and to facilitate the system upon which we will hereafter transact business, we have this day made a general reduction of every article in our line—a reduction of twenty percent below our former prices, for cash, and for cash only will we sell."³²⁵ In another, P.K. Landis, on January 5, 1839, posted an article in the *Indiana Journal* noting that he "respectfully

³²³ Marion County, Probate Complete Record, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

³²⁴ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 403.

³²⁵ *Indiana Democrat*, August 22, 1838.

informs his customers that he has sold out his stock of Dry Goods, and requests all those indebted to him by note or book account, to call and settle without delay, as longer indulgence cannot be given.”³²⁶ Yet another from the *Journal* noted that “just received and opened at the Clothing Store and Tailoring establishment opposite the Washington Hall, a beautiful assortment of FALL AND WINTER GOODS, which will be sold *very low* for cash or on a short credit to *punctual customers*.”³²⁷ The last article is important because it most clearly demonstrates that merchants were struggling with cash on hand. The emphasis on punctuality is an emphatic reminder that customers would not be able to obtain goods on long-term credit due to the Panic.

Business partnerships also experienced a major shakeup during the Panic. A notice in the *Indiana Democrat* in 1838 stated that “The partnership heretofore existing between Bolton and Livingston, was dissolved by mutual consent, on the 4th May, 1838. The amount of debts on subscription, advertisements, jobs, &c., &c., owing the late firm, amount to about \$6000.” It continued by noting that “To make every effort in our power to meet joint liabilities, we have placed all accounts due the establishment in the hands of Mr. George Pattison, who is well acquainted with our business, and will be ready in a few days to enter upon the duties assigned him, with the understanding that the first proceeds of his efforts will be devoted to those having claims against the firm. The urgency of our creditors has compelled us to instruct Mr. Pattison to spare no pains to bring the business to as speedy a close as possible.”³²⁸ Another posting entitled “Dissolution of Partnership” appeared in the *Democrat*. It stated that “the firm of Phillips & Griffith is

³²⁶ *Indiana Journal*, January 5, 1839.

³²⁷ *Indiana Journal*, January 5, 1839.

³²⁸ *Indiana Democrat*, August 22, 1838.

this day dissolved by mutual consent.—The business of the establishment will be carried on by Philips alone—grateful for past patronage, he solicits its continuance. All persons indebted to the firm, will call at the store and settle, by cash or note, with Philips—Delay is Dangerous and the accounts will be left for collection without delay.”³²⁹ A notice posted by F. Foltz and Joseph R. Pratt in the *Democrat* from February 18, 1841, notes that “The Partnership heretofore existing between the subscribers has this day been dissolved by mutual consent. Those indebted to the firm will please make immediate payment to John W. Holland, who is authorized to settle up the business of the concern.”³³⁰

As late as 1841, money was still very tight in the local economy. Calvin Fletcher confided to his diary that “If I would indulge in gloom I could not feel more gloomy for the future prospects of my country so far as it relates to her pecuniary matters.”³³¹ A notice in the *Indiana Journal* from February 7, 1841, noted that “All persons knowing themselves indebted to me by note or book account will please call and settle up before the first of March...as I must have money.” The ad, posted by William Wiley, threatened to turn accounts over to the authorities for collection if they were not promptly paid.³³² Another, from B. K. Smith, similarly stated that “The subscriber is under the painful necessity of saying to his customers and those in arrears that he MUST SAVE MONEY! He finds, by examining his books and papers, numerous claims...which, if they had been docketed a year or two ago would have been made...He is now compelled to call upon

³²⁹ *Indiana Democrat*, August 22, 1838.

³³⁰ *Indiana Democrat*, February 18, 1841.

³³¹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, Vol. 2 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 284.

³³² *Indiana Journal*, February 27, 1841.

his more honest and honorable patrons to stop in and help him out of his difficulty. Cash, cash-notes or judgments must be had, within one month.”³³³

The administrator’s sale for William Vert, of Lawrence Township, placed an ad in the *Indiana Journal* noting that they would sell the farmland, cattle, and crops but would not require immediate payment. The notice stated that “credit of twelve months will be given on all sums over three dollars, purchasers giving bonds or notes with approved security.”³³⁴ This notice is a sharp change from those in 1839-41, when sales routinely demanded at least a portion of money down for any public or private sales. Another advertisement from the same issue noted that the Covington Rolling Mill in Cincinnati “is prepared to furnish at all times a complete assortment of Iron and Nails...The usual credits given to regular customers.”³³⁵ A notice in the *Indiana State Sentinel* suggested that some merchant houses could afford to rely on barter and credit instead of cash. It noted that “produce such as Wheat, Oats, Beef Hides, Linen, and a few other articles taken in exchange for goods in their line, at the market prices.”³³⁶

While there were still large numbers of sheriff’s sales and demands for cash payments in newspapers, late 1842 seems to be a period when merchants began loosening credit restrictions in Marion County. The resumption of specie payment on June 15, 1842, helped bolster the availability of credit in the region. As the effects of the Panic of 1837 wore off, the banks felt they had the ability to again pay their depositors in specie without fear of a run on the institution. The resumption of specie was so smooth that

³³³ *Indiana Democrat*, February 18, 1841.

³³⁴ *Indiana Journal*, November 30, 1842.

³³⁵ *Indiana Journal*, November 30, 1842.

³³⁶ *Indiana State Sentinel*, February 21, 1843.

leaders of the Indianapolis branch of the State Bank noted, “We have expected heavy runs for specie but it passed off without much excitement & not more than \$50 drawn.”

That there were no runs on the Indianapolis branch suggests that they were insulated from the heavy trade of the Ohio River. While out-of-state lenders attempted to recover hard currency at the Ohio River branches, Marion County’s seclusion allowed it to weather any potential runs from out-of-state parties.³³⁷

After 1843, the recovery in Marion County accelerated. New businesses emerged as the Panic and ensuing depression cleared out older businesses. John H. Wright’s pork packing mill was the first successful endeavor in its industry beginning in 1843, according to Calvin Fletcher.³³⁸ Wright partnered with his relatives Jeremiah and William Mansur to begin slaughtering in an abandoned blacksmith shop on the corner of Meridian and Maryland streets just south of the center of the city on the National Road. He took his goods for “half cash and half goods” at his store to induce farmers to bring their stock to him and were successful enough to operate a second location eight miles north of town at Broad Ripple.³³⁹ The success of the slaughterhouse was not lost on Calvin Fletcher. He noted that he “Went to Wright’s pork house in which they put up this year 1500 hogs, the most put up in our market in any one year in our place.” The possibilities of the railroad reaching the city led him to continue that “I look forward to

³³⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 415.

³³⁸ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, The Industries, The Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 345. Dunn suggests that the company began in 1841, but the tough economic times and the details of Fletcher’s diary suggest that Dunn’s work, compiled long after the fact, is incorrect.

³³⁹ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, The Industries, The Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 345.

the day when immense quantities will be put up. Should the railroad reach here from Madison not less than 15 Ms. will be slaughtered here the first year.”³⁴⁰

The state agricultural society was another casualty of the Panic of 1837. Established in 1836 as an “Act for the encouragement of Agriculture,” the agricultural society of Indiana was designed to spur growth in farming so that Hoosiers could use internal improvement systems to send increased crop yields to external markets. The agricultural society did not hold another meeting for five years. Solon Robinson lamented during a trip to Indianapolis that “It is painful to learn that the agricultural society at the seat of government of such a state as Indiana...now sleeps too sound to be awakened by the ordinary cries of a community suffering for the want of a better system of agricultural education.”³⁴¹ Robinson further decried the lack of improved agriculture in the region, stating that “there is a great defect in agricultural knowledge in this part of the world, or we should find more attention paid the cultivation of grass and stock. Around Indianapolis, there are some slight indications of improvement in this respect. But the fact that an agricultural paper was not adequately supported at that place proves that the country was far more rich in soil than any thing else.”³⁴²

Jane Shaffer Elsmere notes that the agricultural societies of Marion County and the state of Indiana “failed within a few years probably due to the state’s small population, inadequate communications, and poor transportation.”³⁴³ When examining

³⁴⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 562.

³⁴¹ Herbert Kellar, *Solon Robinson: Pioneer and Agriculturalist* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1936), 244. This volume is a volume of selected writings of Robinson.

³⁴² Herbert Kellar, *Solon Robinson: Pioneer and Agriculturalist* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1936), 244.

³⁴³ Jane Shaffer Elsmere *Henry Ward Beecher: The Indiana Years, 1837-1847* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 130.

the burden of transportation in Marion County as noted in chapter two, the failure of the agricultural society is less surprising. The association was formed in 1836, the same year that the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill was signed into law. The legislature's support for a statewide agricultural society reflected their belief that the state would be able to transport their goods to external markets for a profit. When the internal improvements projects failed during the Panic of 1837, the proposed transportation network vanished and made farming for markets inefficient. Prominent Indiana agricultural historian and economist William Latta notes that "the cost of transportation of small shipments would often be more than the prices at commercial centers, and increased production, that would make large shipments and economical transportation possible, must wait for the gradual clearing away of the dense forest."³⁴⁴ The result of these lack of transportation networks was a key factor in the failure of the agricultural society by 1841. Hoosiers in central Indiana had no incentive to improve their farming methods to increase output because they could not sell excess crops at a profit. Hence, the agricultural societies would do little to help Hoosier farmers make their lives better.

The Panic of 1837 was devastating for Indiana. The carelessness of internal improvements loans, ineffectiveness of government oversight, and outright illegal activities by loan commissioners left a strong mark on the history of Indiana. In September of 1843, Calvin Fletcher reflected on the severity of the crisis over the past few years. He stated that "I have recently been thro several of our one flourishing towns & out of 20 or 30 merchants at Lafayett only 4 of the old ones survive...There is scarcely a store in many of the county seats & other towns in the state...Out of more than 2000

³⁴⁴ William Latta, *Outline History of Indiana Agriculture* (Lafayette: Purdue University Agricultural Experiment Station, 1938), 59.

merchants in the state not one 20th has escaped the general reck of the credits system...The whole agricultural population are also broken down depressed and made dishonest—3/4 of our legislature for the last 3 years has been known or secret bankrupts.”³⁴⁵ Prominent Indiana historian James Madison provides an excellent understanding of the meaning of the Big Bill when he argues that “The Mammoth Internal Improvements act symbolized both the optimism and the democracy of the age [but] they lost and looked foolish in the end...In a curious irony of history, the venturesome pioneer generation contributed to the reluctance of succeeding generations to take similar risks, to use active state government, as they had, in service of the general welfare. Revulsion with the system of 1836 was a direct cause of the provision in the Indiana Constitution of 1851 that to this day restricts the state from going into debt.”³⁴⁶

The crisis was an even more critical turning point in the history of Marion County. Through the 1830s, residents of central Indiana were certain that the Central Canal would make Indianapolis a major stopping point in water-based transportation systems that would simultaneously bring trade, increase the value of farm land, and allow local citizens to partake in the river-based economy of the United States. With the failure of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill, Hoosiers were forced to adjust their expectations of an agricultural empire. The Agricultural Board was disbanded due to lack of interest, the Central Canal only functioned for a short isolated stretch in Marion County, and land prices dropped precipitously because of the financial collapse. Property values dipped so low that local government had to step in and state that no property could

³⁴⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 535.

³⁴⁶ James Madison, *Hoosiers: A New History of Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 85.

be sold for less than its appraised value to prop up the local economy.³⁴⁷ The original plan for the city of Indianapolis to become a center of western river-based commerce was dead.

³⁴⁷ Charles Warren, *Bankruptcy in the United States History* (Washington D.C.: Beard Books, 1935), 87.

CHAPTER 6: “THE RAILROAD ARRIVES: BEGINNINGS OF TELESKOPED GROWTH, 1844-1852”

The Panic of 1837 brutalized Marion County. Hoosiers gave up their dreams of becoming the center of a water-based commercial system that would command trade between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico as the state rebuilt its finances during the decade following the land bust. Prices for goods dropped, residents fled to the West looking for better opportunities, and those who stayed battled through economic difficulty. Calvin Fletcher, in March of 1840, described the situation by stating that the “change has been sudden & tremendous. One year ago a cow was ready sale at \$15-\$20—wheat \$1 a \$1.25. Now money cannot be got for either... Wheat nominal value 50 cents—cow \$8 and \$10. Merchants cannot longer [obtain] credit... We have greatly abused the privileges of a Kind Providence.”³⁴⁸ The tide turned in favor of Hoosiers during the mid-1840s as railroads captured the collective imagination.³⁴⁹ In 1843, the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad Company took over construction of the first railroad that would connect the state capital to the Ohio River. It took four years for the railroad to get to Indianapolis, but it had a dramatic effect on the development of the city. It began a process of telescoped development that made it one of the first cities in the United States to experience the kind of development regularly seen in the Far West.³⁵⁰ From 1847 to 1865, Indianapolis foreshadowed the kind of explosive growth western

³⁴⁸ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 2* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1973), 160.

³⁴⁹ The railroad boom was preceded by a short plank road craze. For a brief description of this see Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 356-358.

³⁵⁰ Elliot West has discussed the concept of telescoped development as a core concept of frontier cities. See Elliot West, “Grain Kings, Rubber Dreams, and Stock Exchanges: How Transportation and Communication Changed Frontier Cities,” in *Frontier Cities: Encounters at the Crossroads of Empire*, ed. Jay Gitlin, et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 113.

boomtowns would see as transportation and communication networks obliterated time and space.

The style of urbanization in Marion County is significant. Indianapolis was a pioneer in Early Western development. As Richard Wade notes, other major cities in the region—Cincinnati, Louisville, Chicago, St. Louis, Pittsburgh—all had their roots in the 18th century. Like Indianapolis, they were planned cities whose development preceded the arrival of settlers. In Wade’s telling, towns were the “spearheads of the frontier.”³⁵¹ Unlike the Hoosier capital, these cities had access to *effective* river transportation that shaped their economic development. The success of water-oriented shipping in these cities allowed for the emergence of long-standing social, economic, and cultural relationships. These relationships provided stability as society and markets changed over time, but those relationships also hampered the kind of economic and transportation development seen in Indianapolis. River cities experienced a developmental inertia because of the social, economic, and political relationships created by successful water transportation. They ultimately prevented river-based urban areas from immediately adopting new infrastructure technologies like the railroad. As a result, Indianapolis and the surrounding community grew faster, especially in agricultural pursuits, than any other city in the Early West.

Hoosiers also had to deal with the arrival of large numbers of outsiders that threatened the established social structures that existed when the city was a secluded hamlet. Marion County was settled overwhelmingly by Anglo-American Protestants, but the rise of the railroad created a national infrastructure that lowered travel costs. The

³⁵¹ Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 1.

waves of immigrants that poured ashore during the 1840s could cheaply travel west, and the boomtown of Indianapolis was an attractive location. The arrival of these outsiders challenged the balance of electoral power and social stability in the city and gave rise to a feeling of anxiety best exemplified by the creation of local vigilante groups. Residents like Calvin Fletcher were also unable to show the tolerance for roughhousing that existed early in the city's history, as city leaders wrote disdainfully about the recreation of immigrant groups that settled in the city during the 1840s. Locals argued about the ways that outsiders were a threat to their security as residents of Marion County organized paralegal military organizations to police the seemingly insecure social landscape. Labor strife was one unique factor of urbanization that was absent in Marion County. Labor tensions were not palpable in the early railroad era as the building boom soaked up excess workers who were replaced by agricultural machinery. Overall, the late-1840s noticed a significant shift in Marion County, as the economic life of the region improved drastically but social tensions emerged that threatened the vision of what early settlers dreamed would be the perfect haven of wealth and tranquility.

In Indianapolis, the arrival of the railroad drastically restructured the local and regional transportation system and made the city a hub of western commerce. There were practically no economic institutions that lobbied against the rise of the railroad because all residents suffered from a lack of access to outside markets. As noted in previous chapters, internal improvements received support from all parts of Hoosier society, so when the canal project failed, the railroad received all the remaining support for internal improvements. As Donald Carmony has noted, this led to the "unusually rapid advance" of railroads in Indiana during the 1850s. In 1850, Governor Joseph A.

Wright announced that there were 212 miles of railroad in the state. By 1853, Wright noted that there were over 800 miles and in 1855, Hoosiers reported that the state had 1,406 operable miles of track.³⁵²

In Marion County, the advance of the railroad was as fortuitous as it was anywhere in the world. Prior to the arrival of the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad in 1847, Hoosiers were practically unconnected with regional economic networks and remained on the economic frontier. After the arrival of the rail, however, residents quickly saw the economic benefits of their new connections as prices for agricultural goods, such as wheat, jumped from forty to ninety cents over the course of a few weeks.³⁵³ Calvin Fletcher described a sharp price increase for agricultural goods over the course of a year.³⁵⁴ Local residents also began to establish their own economic sphere of influence by manufacturing their own goods and selling them to others in Marion County. By January of 1848, residents could buy wholesale readymade clothes from the Palmer House or stationery from the Hood and Noble businesses on Washington Street.³⁵⁵ In April of 1848, David Craighead opened his wholesale drugstore.³⁵⁶ By September 1848, residents could buy wholesale dry goods from L.B. Williamson's store on Washington Street.³⁵⁷ In May of 1848, the telegraph reached the city, connecting central Indiana to Dayton, Cincinnati and "the East" on the "lightning line."³⁵⁸

³⁵² Donald Carmony, *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 360-362.

³⁵³ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *History of Greater Indianapolis* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 146.

³⁵⁴ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 3* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1974), 309, 417.

³⁵⁵ *The Locomotive*, January 8, 1848.

³⁵⁶ *The Locomotive*, April 1, 1848.

³⁵⁷ *Indiana State Sentinel*, September 14, 1848.

³⁵⁸ *The Locomotive*, May 13, 1848.

There was also an alteration in the urban layout. Albert Dickens states that the depot “led to a rapid change in the structural pattern of the city.”³⁵⁹ By 1850, there were over 100 manufacturing establishments in the city producing at least \$500 of goods.³⁶⁰ Real property also increased in value from roughly one million dollars in 1847 to 2.3 million dollars in 1850.³⁶¹ The railroad allowed these manufacturers to ship their products to Ohio River markets for the first time and shop owners began locating their outfits near the rail depot. The Madison and Indianapolis Railroad Depot lay on South Street just east of Meridian. The land was cheap, swampy, and virtually untouched by farmers in the preceding decades, but the arrival of the railroad drew manufacturing to the southeast side of the city. James Falconer, owner of the Monumental Marble Works, built his shop “at the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad Depot” on the southeast corner of the city.³⁶² Charles Woodward and his partners S.V.B. and T.R. Noel advertised their wholesale warehouse on the west side and the Blythe and Holland merchant warehouse was on the east side of the same depot.³⁶³

The increase in economic activity after the arrival of the railroad also brought increased urbanization. The new newspaper, tellingly entitled *The Locomotive*, reflected the excitement surrounding the arrival of the railroad. It noted that “During the coming summer there will be more building erected here than there ever was in any two

³⁵⁹ Albert Dickens, “The Growth and Structure of Real Property Uses in Indianapolis” (Master’s Thesis: Indiana University, 1939), 23.

³⁶⁰ William Doherty, “Indianapolis in the 1870s: Hard Times in the Gilded Age” (PhD Diss., Indiana University, 1981), 33.

³⁶¹ Albert Dickens, “The Growth and Structure of Real Property Uses in Indianapolis” (Master’s Thesis: Indiana University, 1939), 24.

³⁶² *Indiana State Sentinel*, June 1, 1848.

³⁶³ *Indiana State Sentinel*, September 14, 1848.

seasons...There will be a great demand for the different kinds of mechanics here this summer.”³⁶⁴ More than three hundred homes were built during 1849.³⁶⁵ By 1854, the *Indiana Sentinel* noted that there was a housing shortage in the city.³⁶⁶ Indianapolis boosters finally achieved the economic goals they sought since the earliest days of settlement in the 1820s. For the first time, Indianapolis had the opportunity to get involved in the economy of the nation on a scale only seen in regions connected to the broader world of trade by water or rail.

In contrast, residents in river cities were slow to recognize that the railroad threatened the viability of river trade in the long-term. Jeremy Atack and others argue that the entire state of Ohio was slow to grasp the merits of railroads because, “having invested heavily in the earlier canal technology, Ohio initially tried hard to discourage the [railroad] from devaluing the state’s existing infrastructure investment.”³⁶⁷ Sentiments that the Ohio River would provide an endless commercial bounty were so strong in the early nineteenth century that local Cincinnati leaders were forced to warn against “excessive faith in the river as a commercial mother lode.”³⁶⁸ As railroads became more important, it became imperative for urban areas to overcome the economic bias toward rivers. But residents did not always see the long-term implications of infrastructure change. Steven Ross notes that “having failed to embrace the railroad as rapidly as they

³⁶⁴ *The Locomotive*, March 11, 1848.

³⁶⁵ Albert Dickens, “The Growth and Structure of Real Property Uses in Indianapolis” (Master’s Thesis: Indiana University, 1939), 24.

³⁶⁶ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, March 21, 1854.

³⁶⁷ Jeremy Atack, et al., “Did Railroads Induce or Follow Economic Growth?: Urbanization and Population Growth in the American Midwest, 1850-1860” (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2009): 6.

³⁶⁸ Jon Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 35.

had the steamboat, [Cincinnati's] merchants and capitalists could only moan as the bulk of the East-West trade of the 1850s and 1860s shifted from rivers to rails and consequently away from Cincinnati."³⁶⁹

As mentioned above, Cincinnati dominated the Indianapolis market in the 1830s. In 1846, advertisements still routinely mention the prices and products of Porkopolis. One advertisement from the *Indiana State Sentinel* declared the availability of stoves which he received "direct from the manufacturer in Cincinnati...which he will sell at the smallest possible advance on the Cincinnati price."³⁷⁰ An ad placed a week later in the competing *Indiana Journal* by company agent James Calhoun publicized that the "[Queen City Varnish Company]...will shortly be in the receipt of the largest and best supply of [gums] for the manufacture of [v]arnish, ever brought into the Western country."³⁷¹ Other advertisements offer goods including window shades, wine, liquor and cigars from Cincinnati producers.³⁷² The preponderance of advertisements from Cincinnati reflected their dominance over the Ohio River trade in the early nineteenth century. Merchants and producers in the "Queen City of the West" had easy overland access to Indianapolis up to 1847 and had solidified trade ties to wholesalers and merchants to the north. For two decades, Cincinnati could supply the nascent Hoosier capital with basic goods necessary for professional development and personal comfort. However, increasing industrial output and the expansion of rail lines throughout the northern part of the United States gave rise to an economic challenge to Cincinnati.

³⁶⁹ Steven Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 76.

³⁷⁰ *Indiana State Sentinel*, January 9, 1847.

³⁷¹ *Indiana Journal*, January 19, 1847.

³⁷² *Indiana State Journal*, April 20, 1847; *Indiana State Journal*, October 4, 1847.

The increasing capabilities of railroad infrastructure drove a shift away from Cincinnati. By the end of 1847, advertisements from New York firms were a regular feature of Hoosier papers. One advertisement in the *Indiana State Journal* by New York-based merchants, artisans and mechanics aimed “solicit the calls of country merchants who wish to purchase any articles in their line.”³⁷³ Another declared the sale of foreign periodicals such as the *London Quarterly Review* and noted that “[the] above [p]eriodicals are reprinted in New York...they afford all that advantage to the *American* over the English reader.”³⁷⁴ Further announcements proclaimed the availability of “the largest and best assortment of [s]ilk parasols and [p]arasolettes [e]ver offered to the [m]erchants of America.”³⁷⁵ These advertisements from eastern producers reflect the integration and modernization of the national economy and the rise in production from manufactories. However, it also reflects that the city of Indianapolis became a larger cog in the national economy. Population growth in the western city made shipping products more efficient by allowing eastern merchants to combine loads. Increased traffic to Indianapolis forced a restructuring of transportation networks. The appearance of a railroad provided the city with a contemporary symbol of promise. The growing city became a natural economic market for coastal merchants because of these changes, as businessmen could quickly and easily address local consumer needs and manufacture goods cheaper than their western competitors.

The insurgence of eastern merchants into western markets caused a regional tussle. Competition for the Indianapolis market emerged as a central theme of advertisers

³⁷³ *Indiana State Journal*, September 28, 1847.

³⁷⁴ *Indiana State Sentinel*, October 2, 1847.

³⁷⁵ *Indiana State Sentinel*, January 9, 1847.

seeking Hoosier business. One eastern advertisement touted the sale of cough drops “prepared from the receipt of an eminent German physician...having been extensively used in the eastern States with unparalleled success.”³⁷⁶ Another proclaimed the success of cheap goods purchased from New York “since the great reduction in prices, which will enable us to astonish the natives in the way of great bargains.”³⁷⁷ The Philadelphia merchants selling parasols told consumers of their advantages over other producers, stating that they, “have adopted every improvement in machinery, manufacture mainly by steam, and have carried the division of labor to a great extent” which will allow them “to offer lower prices than ever before.” Significantly, the author of this advertisement laid out his business model to prospective customers. He noted that “[s]mall profits, large returns, and the mutual interests of buyer and seller, on a broad scale, is the object and basis of this...house.”³⁷⁸ These advertisements imply that eastern merchants were actively *seeking out* markets in Indianapolis. Instead of having Hoosier partners in New York, eastern merchants and businessmen—using newly located telegraph lines and railroad transportation—were asking local merchants to cut out the middle men in Cincinnati. The guide shown here reflects traditional patterns in the modernization and expansion of capitalism in the United States. The most efficient producers—those in New York, Boston and Philadelphia—used improving transportation and communication technology to expand their market influence in ever-increasing areas throughout the nation.³⁷⁹ On the way, they competed with producers and merchants who traditionally

³⁷⁶ *Indiana Journal*, January 12, 1847.

³⁷⁷ *Indiana Journal*, January 19, 1847.

³⁷⁸ *Indiana State Sentinel*, January 9, 1847.

³⁷⁹ One excellent example of the structure of how communication revolutionized markets is seen in Elliot West, *The Essential West: Collected Essays* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 2012), 78-99.

served their clients' needs. After 1847, the technological and transportation infrastructure quickly evolved enough that the New York economic market efficiently reached the Early West.

The city experienced serious growth due to the arrival of the railroad, but the telescoped development of Indianapolis also created serious problems for the city. The economic success of railroads depended on efficient delivery of goods from the hinterland to the marketplace so that time was not wasted. Marion County residents were forced to adapt their conception of time to fit the railroad. An advertisement in the *Locomotive* suggested these tensions, noting "The citizens of Indianapolis have been bothered, to know when, where or how to get the correct time...Now the truth of the matter is, none have been able to keep the correct time, for want of a *good* time piece." The subscriber, clock and watch shop owner W.H. Talbott, stated that he bought a "Mercurial Regulator...in which all can have confidence." Talbott's advertisement certainly aimed to draw customers to his shop, but it is equally important that he believed that residents felt that the lack of a common time was detrimental to city business.³⁸⁰ In the 1830s, Hoosiers began buying timepieces in expectation that they would use them on the canal, but the failure of the canal ended their usefulness. By 1848, however, Hoosiers were searching for ways to increase their efficiency as they connected to regional and national markets that necessitated a complex timekeeping structure.

³⁸⁰ *The Locomotive*, January 29, 1848. The seminal work on time-consciousness is E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism" in *Past & Present*, No. 38 (1967): 56-97; Herbert Gutman examines this approach in the United States in "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919" in *The American Historical Review* 78 (1973): 531-588; a more recent study is Martin Brueghel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 87-90.

One measure of Hoosier excitement during the 1850s was the re-emergence of a formal Agricultural Society and the rebirth of the Board of Agriculture of the State of Indiana, the reports of which offer insight into the concerns of central Indiana farmers. The first Ag Society in Marion County emerged in 1825. It failed quickly due to lack of interest, presumably because improved agriculture would provide no benefit due to lack of transportation access. The next attempt to create a supporting institution to agricultural improvement emerged in 1835. The timing is significant because of the emergence of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill. Hoosiers in central Indiana were willing to participate in the society because they believed that they would be able to transport crops to Ohio River markets. However, the Panic of 1837 quickly dashed the hopes that Marion County residents would achieve that access and, as a result, local interest in the society faded and would not meet again until 1851.

The lack of an agricultural society in Marion County between 1837 and 1850 does not mean that all residents gave up on improvements. Many prominent Hoosiers promoted agricultural improvements. Henry Ward Beecher, the outspoken anti-slavery speaker, promoted agricultural improvements and the moral purpose of farming during the course of his time in the Hoosier capital. In 1840, he was instrumental in forming the Indiana Horticultural Society and in his "Seven Lectures to Young Men," published in 1844, he argued that agricultural propriety shielded one from accusations of idleness. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo! It was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and

the stone wall thereof was broken down.”³⁸¹ For Beecher, “in America, industry is prosperity...every product of the earth has a susceptibility of improvement.”³⁸² He wanted his readers to work hard in the mechanical arts so that they would earn an honest living as opposed to the “scheming speculations of the last ten years that have produced an aversion among the young to the slow accumulations of ordinary industry and fired them with a conviction that shrewdness, cunning, and bold ventures are a more manly way to wealth.”³⁸³ The preacher believed that the actions of the new sort of young men created social problems in rural communities because, “the young farmer becomes almost ashamed to meet his schoolmate, whose stores line whole streets, whose stocks are in every bank and company, and whose increasing money is already wellnigh inestimable.”³⁸⁴ These comments hit home in Indianapolis during the aftermath of the Panic of 1837. Perhaps in an attempt to justify the rural character of the local populace, he stated that “if a young man has no higher ambition in life than riches, industry—plain, rugged brown-faced, homely-clad, old-fashioned industry—must be courted.”³⁸⁵

The reemergence of the county agricultural societies was partially influenced by the emergence of Henry Ward Beecher on the national political scene. Beecher, one of the most influential preachers of the mid-nineteenth century, moved to Indianapolis in 1837 to run the Second Presbyterian Church—a newly formed parish on the northwest corner of Market Street on the Circle in the center of town. Beecher’s success in

³⁸¹ Jane Shaffer Elsmere, *Henry Ward Beecher: The Indiana Years, 1837-1847* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society 1973), 130; Henry Ward Beecher, *Seven Lectures to Young Men* (Cincinnati: J. B. Ford and Company, 1873), 3.

³⁸² Henry Ward Beecher, *Seven Lectures to Young Men* (Cincinnati: J. B. Ford and Company, 1873), 10.

³⁸³ Henry Ward Beecher, *Seven Lectures to Young Men* (Cincinnati: J. B. Ford and Company, 1873), 10.

³⁸⁴ Henry Ward Beecher, *Seven Lectures to Young Men* (Cincinnati: J. B. Ford and Company, 1873), 10.

³⁸⁵ Henry Ward Beecher, *Seven Lectures to Young Men* (Cincinnati: J. B. Ford and Company, 1873), 11.

preaching to the local community and his insistence on improving local agriculture gave rise to his editorship of the *Indiana Farmer and Gardener*. On New Year's Day in 1846, his newspaper joined with the *Western Farmer and Gardener*, and by the end of the year had more than 1200 subscribers. Beecher's growing prominence as an anti-slavery advocate provided the necessary interest to grow his agricultural newspaper. However, the publication ended when he moved to New York in 1847.³⁸⁶ The resulting lack of an agricultural periodical gave rise to the formation of county agricultural societies.

By 1852, Marion County was regaining its footing as an agricultural and economic power. No fewer than four railroads connected the city to places on the Ohio River, and more were under construction. Across the state, more than thirty counties organized an Agricultural Society under an 1851 law that allowed for a State Board of Agriculture. Residents of central Indiana followed in these footsteps reforming the County Agricultural Society that was abandoned after 1836. The initial report of the Marion County chapter of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture was incredibly positive in its assessment of Indiana agriculture. It noted that Hoosiers were becoming increasingly aware of the opportunities of agricultural improvement by stating that "The public mind seems now to have waked up to the realization of something practical; and each man asks for himself the *best system*, the *best mode*, the *best manner* of reaping the reward for the labor bestowed upon the earth."³⁸⁷ The State Board pushed for "what is

³⁸⁶ David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 314, 735.

³⁸⁷ *Annual Address of the State Board of Agriculture of Indiana* (Indianapolis: J.P. Chapman, 1852), 6. The annual addresses were compiled and printed in a volume that housed the state and available county addresses, as well as the financial standing of member groups and special speeches related to agricultural pursuits in other regions.

always desirable, the saving of time and toil, but means of the most judicious, skillful and approved application of labor to any given pursuit.”³⁸⁸

The Marion County branch of the State Board of Agriculture, headed by none other than Calvin Fletcher, noted that improvements in Marion County were well underway in some areas. The prominent farmer specifically stated that “we are pleased to state that our farmers are introducing new labor saving machines—new thrashers [sic], shellers, straw-cutters and other implements.”³⁸⁹ He also noted that local farmers were using the Gatling grain drill, of which the “results highly approved,” and the McCormick reaper which, he noted, “has well sustained its high reputation.”³⁹⁰ And that “deeper and better plowing as well as rolling of the land is beginning to meet with practical favor.”³⁹¹ Fletcher noted regarding his own farm that “I have built me a barn and repaired my house prepared my farm for a better and Higher state of agriculture. Expenditures have been greater than usual but hope I shall realize my outgoes in future.”³⁹² Newspaper advertisements also show that Hoosiers were interested in agricultural improvements. A June 8, 1848 notice in the *Indiana State Sentinel* stated that Gatling’s Wheat Drill was the “most valuable improvement in planting wheat...the time is not far distant when the farmers of this State, as in all of the older states, will consider the wheat drill an indispensable labor saving machine.”³⁹³

³⁸⁸ *Annual Address of the State Board of Agriculture of Indiana* (Indianapolis: J.P. Chapman, 1852), 8.

³⁸⁹ *Annual Address of the State Board of Agriculture of Indiana* (Indianapolis: J.P. Chapman, 1852), 114.

³⁹⁰ *Annual Address of the State Board of Agriculture of Indiana* (Indianapolis: J.P. Chapman, 1852), 114.

³⁹¹ *Annual Address of the State Board of Agriculture of Indiana* (Indianapolis: J.P. Chapman, 1852), 114.

³⁹² Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 4* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1975), 168.

³⁹³ *Indiana State Sentinel*, June 8, 1848.

The 1850 Census of Agriculture shows the effects of water-based infrastructure on Marion County when compared to the rest of the Early West. The Hoosier capital lagged far behind river counties when examining markers like percentage of improved land, cash value/farm, and land value/acre. Marion County, as shown in the Appendix, was more on par with counties away from the Ohio, Wabash or Whitewater River valleys. The only category that Marion County was comparable with river-based counties was in the land value per improved acre in 1850, presumably because the railroad finally reached the city and the price of improved land increased dramatically.

However, not everything in Marion County was improving. The report noted that “the number and quality of neat cattle have not been improving, and no pains have recently been taken to improve the breed of hogs.”³⁹⁴ That Calvin Fletcher noted the lack of improvement in cattle and hogs and the lack of focus on improved crops presents an interesting problem. Why did Hoosiers hold back investments in improved breeds and seeds after they had access to national markets? This is explained by a short excerpt from the *Indiana Gazeteer* from 1849. Describing the hesitance of Hoosiers to specialize for external markets, they hint that farmers would rather stay diversified because of “frequent gluts in the market of some kinds of produce,” and continued by stating that “the farmer often doubts as to the proper objects on which to expend his labor, and it has become very desirable that he should have a greater diversity of crops than he has had hitherto.”³⁹⁵ Hoosiers, rather than quickly specializing to use their agricultural advantage to full effect after 1847, *diversified* to offset the radical changes to markets during the

³⁹⁴ *Annual Address of the State Board of Agriculture of Indiana* (Indianapolis: J.P. Chapman, 1852), 113.

³⁹⁵ *The Indiana Gazeteer* (Indianapolis: E. Chamberlin, 1849), 49.

massive infrastructure change. The economic changes of the early nineteenth century were so drastic that Hoosiers reverted to *stronger* versions of self-subsistence to make sure their families were secure before they adapted the specialization that historians frequently note occurred as market connections emerged in new regions.³⁹⁶

Moreover, there was a labor shortage during the initial years after the railroad entered Marion County. As noted above, the population of the region increased dramatically during the period from 1847-1860, but the need for construction labor also increased rapidly. Building an infrastructure for railroads, housing, government, and other major trades kept immigrants in town doing construction rather than working for fields. When farmers finally had the ability to acquire increased prices, they lacked the labor to immediately increase output unless they took the heavy expenditure of buying machinery. Only those who could comfortably afford grain drills and reapers could harness the power of the market. Those that lived closer to the economic margins reverted to diversification to see where the market would go.

By 1848, economic activity in Indianapolis seemed to operate on a predominantly cash basis. This alteration marked an important evolution in the history of the city. Cash

Charles Sellers describes the process of market orientation as a purely profit-driven initiative where farmers turned toward exports when the prices of crops rose enough to cover transportation costs. See Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 15-16; see also, John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 199-204; Paul Gates, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture, 1815-1860* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960); Clarence Danhof, *Changes in Agriculture: The Northern United States, 1820-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969). Willard Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979); Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, *To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987); the best treatment of the subject is Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 273-313.

³⁹⁶ Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 14.

ubiquity marked another turning point in which the city entered a full-fledged market economy as described by Christopher Clark.³⁹⁷ As the city urbanized, carpenters, blacksmiths, and laborers all earned wages for their work instead of barter. For example, in 1849, Samuel Merrill paid James Keely and J.M. Barnwell in cash for work bricklaying and shingling.³⁹⁸ These workers used this money to buy goods and pay for lodging. But country producers were not able to rely solely on cash. Rural residents of Marion County still relied mostly on barter to accomplish their economic goals. Advertisements showing that merchants would accept country produce still existed. Jesse Jones and J. H. McKernan opened a shop on Washington Street advertising their assortment of dry goods. They would take cash or “all kinds of country produce and marketing in exchange for their goods.”³⁹⁹ These transactions were remnants of a frontier economic model in Indianapolis where local merchants offered credit to country producers for the year and traded goods for their crops.⁴⁰⁰ Indianapolis grew after the arrival of the railroad, but rural residents were limited in their ability to enter the cash economy during the first years of economic expansion.

The brief push to diversify crops to stave off economic risk was only one surprise that awaited Hoosiers during their attempts to connect to markets. At the same moment transportation improvements made mobility cheaper, an influx of European immigrants to the region led to arguments over proper social etiquette and the contestation of what it

³⁹⁷ Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 14.

³⁹⁸ Samuel Merrill Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

³⁹⁹ *Indiana State Sentinel*, September 14, 1848.

⁴⁰⁰ Margaret Walsh, *The Manufacturing Frontier: Pioneer Industry in Antebellum Wisconsin 1830-1860* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1972), 28-32.

meant to be an American. Hoosiers, long accustomed to the relatively uniform social character of their region—dominated by white Protestants—for the first time had to deal with the issue of massive mobility. As late as 1830, there were no unnaturalized citizens residing in Marion County.⁴⁰¹ However, unbeknownst to them, Hoosiers opened their community to the outside world at precisely the same time Europeans were beginning to migrate to the United States in huge numbers due to famine and revolution. The result was a virtual double-whammy, as central Indiana opened itself up to the nation and the nation opened itself up to the world.

Hoosiers quickly realized that by bringing in economic activity to their region, they also attracted workers who did not share their cultural values. Most Indiana historians studying the Irish during the early pioneer era focus on violence and how those workers fought due to cultural values or to religious factionalism.⁴⁰² However, Jay Perry argues that Indiana historians have frequently overstated the religious significance of Irish conflict because of the oft-cited conflict on the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne. By examining similar conflicts in other states on internal improvement projects across the nation, Perry convincingly argues that the date was pure coincidence and that controlling the ability to acquire jobs was the major factor of the dispute.⁴⁰³ For Perry, immigrants were much more likely to fight when issues of payment or job availability

⁴⁰¹ James J. Divita, "Ethnics in Indiana between Statehood and the Civil War, 1816 to 1860" (no publisher info), 1988.

⁴⁰² Logan J. Esarey, *Internal Improvements in Early Indiana* (Indianapolis: Edward J. Heckler, 1912), 94-95; Charles R. Poinsett, *Fort Wayne During the Canal Era, 1828-1855* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1969), 62; Paul Fatout, *Indiana Canals* (Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1972), 69; William Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870), 63.

⁴⁰³ Jay Perry, "The Irish Wars: Laborer Feuds on Indiana's Canals and Railroads in the 1830s" *Indiana Magazine of History* 109 (2013): 250.

emerged. In Marion County, these two issues emerged simultaneously in the late 1830s after boosters, hoping to capitalize on the bounties of the Canal Era, advertised in the *Evansville Journal* for Irish workers to come build the canals which brought a surge of Fardowns to compete with a Corkonian faction of workers. These workers viciously fought each other as a way to control opportunities to work on public projects and mistrusted each other deeply. As the full brunt of the panic hit in 1839 with the stoppage of all public works, the vast majority of Irish workers were laid off with little money and few job prospects, which further increased the tensions between the two groups. The revised argument holds up in Marion County. In 1839, local resident and contractor Nathaniel Vice was forced to give up his contract on the canal due to lack of funds. He paid his Irish workers as much as he could according to what they were owed, but suspicion at a perceived slight led to a street fight between Vice and several workers.⁴⁰⁴ As Irish laborers responded to the harsh world in which they lived, Hoosiers became increasingly irritated at the new cultural complexities their society experienced. One commenter, upon visiting the city for the first time in 1839, noted that “the influx of adventurers and foreigners attracted hither by the public works in the vicinity, has exerted a deleterious influence upon the morals of the people, gambling and dissipation being too common, and petty theft scarcely rebuked.”⁴⁰⁵

A similar experience emerged when Germans immigrated to the city as rail builders. By 1850, twelve percent of Indianapolis residents had “immediate German

⁴⁰⁴ William Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870), 54.

⁴⁰⁵ J. Gould, “Wanderings in the West in 1839” *Indiana Magazine of History* 30 (1934): 71-103.

ancestry.”⁴⁰⁶ Hoosiers received a cultural shock that they did not expect when they laid the plans for their market connectivity. The influx of immigrants was an issue of dispute even before the railroad reached the city. Calvin Fletcher noted that German immigrants, by 1844, were affecting local politics, stating “The polls were opened at 8 A.M. the newly naturalized Germans rushed to the polls to vote the democrat ticket.” Fletcher, as a strong temperance Whig, noted that “The ignorance, the want of schools, the deficiency of men of integrity & intelligence renders it almost unfit for self-government.”⁴⁰⁷ These Germans were the first of a wave that settled in Central Indiana as they worked on the railroad during the early years of the 1840s. In the years following the Revolutions of 1848, these immigrants would increase in number throughout the Early West, filling other cities like Cincinnati, St. Louis and Milwaukee with expatriates. By 1849, the German community existed on the east edge of downtown bordered by Market, East, Noble and New York streets. The problem was equally bad in 1852 according to Fletcher. He noted that “Some 500 Germans Some 250 or 300 naturalized within 3 days so as to vote under our new constitution. All thronged the ground ready to vote for license to sell liquor—one unanimous voice almost from foreigner to encourage intoxication...Soon it was discoverable that the German vote would be unanimous for Todd the whisky candidate & that they would elect a German justice of the peace.”⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ George Probst, *The Germans in Indianapolis: 1840-1919* (Indianapolis: German-American Center, 1989), 3. The opening chapter gives an explanation for the push factors that moved Germans to emigrate the United States.

⁴⁰⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 3* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1974), 86.

⁴⁰⁸ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 4* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1975), 408.

After the Madison and Indianapolis railroad reached the city in 1847, the workers who built the project remained in the city and tried to find jobs. The stereotype of Irish troublemakers continued in the eye of private citizens. Fletcher, in 1850, noted that “the Irish made an appointment to fight a pitch battle on Judge Stevens lot opposite of the house. I went out & scolded them. One had injured the other badly.”⁴⁰⁹ In 1852, Calvin Fletcher again took umbrage with the Irish regarding property rights. He noted that “I had some difficulty with the Irish who have turned their cattle on to me or let some oxen encroach on me which were employed on the rail Road Cincinnati on the section right south of us. They paid me \$2 & agreed to trespass no more.”⁴¹⁰

While Fletcher was awarded damages quickly, the presence of Irish people in the public sphere was an increasing problem as the region increased in population. One of the major battlegrounds in the 1852 election was whether the Irish should vote Democratic or Whig. One telling example of the mudslinging aimed at gaining Irish support for the Democratic Party appeared in the July 29, 1852 issue of the *Indiana State Sentinel* claiming “the remarks of the [*Indiana*] *Journal* accompanying the list are evidently designed to convey the impression that while the Whigs were remarkably liberal in the contributions [to the Irish relief fund], Democrats were the reverse.” The article continues by suggesting that the Democrats were, in fact, more charitable to the fund and that “the editor of the *Journal*...considers the Irish voters...as little better than a parcel of fools.”⁴¹¹ That Irish people represented such a significant portion of the

⁴⁰⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 4* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1975), 228.

⁴¹⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 4* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1975), 506.

⁴¹¹ *Indiana State Sentinel*, July 29, 1852.

population as to warrant an open feud between the *Indiana State Sentinel* and the *Indiana Journal* shows that they were a powerful voting bloc and were obtaining electoral power on par with long-settled residents.

That Fletcher scolded the Irish for fighting suggests an important evolution of behavioral expectations in the city between 1830 and 1850. Fighting was a regular pastime in the early history of the city. Although city ordinance prohibited fighting punishable by a fine, it was a common occurrence and caused no social tension.⁴¹²

William Holloway recounted the early history of fighting in the city, noting that “the fighting in the early days of the capital was quite a feature in its social, or unsocial, life. No Saturday passed without one, or commonly, a half dozen...It was not done to attract attention and create notoriety either.”⁴¹³ One recollection from his 1870 history of the city noted that:

The Methodists were holding a camp meeting in the military ground and under the ministrations of Rev James Havens then in the prime of his enormous physical strength and impressive but uncultured eloquence were making many converts. On the third day of the meeting Burkhart barefooted and considerably drunk wandered into the woods and around the camp ground keeping himself quiet and unobtrusive. An additional drink or two, however, started him and began marching around the outer line of the seats shouting a dirty couplet of original rhyme at the top of his voice. The preacher several times stopped kindly asked him to go off and not disturb the congregation, but without effect last he came down from the pulpit walked right up to old Buck a bit of that astonished him and asked him again to go off and leave them alone. He swore he wouldn't and Mr. Havens at once knocked him down whipped him till he

⁴¹² There are various instances of fines for fighting in Marion County. For a few examples, see November 5, 1827; January 27, 1828; July 5, 1828, in *Commissioner's Record, Vol. 3, Part A 1827-1834* (Indianapolis, IN, 1941); an early article about pioneer life reflects the same experience. Benjamin Parker and George Cottman, "Pioneer Life," *Indiana Magazine of History* 3 (1907): 2-11.

⁴¹³ William Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870), 55.

roared. His defeat by a preacher the object of supreme contempt to the gang ruined the leader's power. Shortly afterwards he was arrested for some misconduct and taken before Squire Scudder where he "cavorted" and boasted furiously till Samuel Merrill as he used to tell the story to the writer good humoredly took up his challenge for a scuffle and threw him violently the floor of the Squire's office. These successive humiliations, and the growth the moral element of the town, were too much for "Old Buck" and he moved to the Bluffs, where he reformed and died at an advanced age.⁴¹⁴

Oliver Johnson echoed Holloway in his remembrance of the city. He noted that "Fights was right common when I was young. Fists would start flying over triflin matters."⁴¹⁵ The type of fighting noted in the early years of the city reflect those recounted by Elliot Gorn in his studies of backcountry life in the antebellum era. Fighting was a test of manhood and honor rather than a social upheaval, and Hoosiers seemed accustomed to the frequent fighting that existed in the city during the early years.⁴¹⁶ Dave Burkhardt was well known as a fighter and troublemaker in the city but was still allowed to open a grocery in his house.⁴¹⁷ It seems that the tolerance for fighting faded as the city grew from an isolated outpost to one where middle-class notions of respectability emerged. As such, Hoosiers lost their tolerance for fighting as Germans and Irish descended on the city and recast expectations about public behavior.

Many historians have noted that anger toward European immigrants created a period of extreme social stress in the United States. Nativism was rampant in the 1840s

⁴¹⁴ William Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870), 53.

⁴¹⁵ Oliver Johnson, *A Home in the Woods: Oliver Johnson's Reminiscences of Early Marion County* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1951), 209.

⁴¹⁶ Elliot Gorn, "Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch": The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry" *The American Historical Review* 90 (1985): 18-43.

⁴¹⁷ July 6, 1829, *Commissioner's Record, Vol. 3, Part A 1827-1834*, (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1941).

as the rise of Know-Nothing parties emerged across the United States. While these movements were strongest in the Northeast, Indiana had a strong American Party beginning in 1852 that continued until 1860. The gradual breakdown of the Whig Party after the Panic of 1837 and the increasing number of immigrants created a tempestuous atmosphere where anti-Catholicism and nativism flourished. This tension was fueled by the arrival of immigrants to the Hoosier capital beginning in the 1830s during the canal era.⁴¹⁸ Adam Criblez, examining the rise of nativist movements in the Midwest, states that the rise of the American Republican Association in Marion County was specifically formed to protest the arrival of Germans in the 1840s.⁴¹⁹ In 1844, an article “Native Americanism” in the *Indiana State Sentinel* exclaimed “It is earnestly desired that every man who has the honor and welfare of his country at heart, and would resist the encroachments of foreigners upon the rights and privileges of the *native born* citizens, will come forward at this important crisis.”⁴²⁰

Arguably, the most overt symbol of the stress of transportation connectivity for the state was the new state constitution of 1851, which barred African-Americans from entering the state. During the 1840s economic downturn, Hoosiers became afraid of anyone entering the state who could drive down wages, especially people of color. Thus, the overwhelmingly white male voting population banded together to add an amendment banning one particular group of people who could be forced to work for less.⁴²¹ This

⁴¹⁸ James J. Divita, “Ethnics in Indiana between Statehood and the Civil War, 1816 to 1860” (no publisher info), 1988.

⁴¹⁹ Adam Criblez, *Parading Patriotism: Independence Day Celebrations in the Urban Midwest, 1826-1876* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 61-62.

⁴²⁰ *Indiana State Sentinel*, July 11, 1844.

⁴²¹ An excellent analysis of the racial issues surrounding the Constitution of 1850 is seen in Erik C. Wade, “Constituting Whiteness: The National Horse Thief Detective Association and Racial Mores in Indiana, 1850-1930” (Ph.D. Diss., Purdue University, 2011).

anxiety emerged from the perceived threat of an influx of African-Americans during the 1840s, as blacks decided to move to the Early West to buy cheap land and escape the difficulties of life in settled regions. Escaped slaves and freedmen also immigrated to the region as early as the 1820s. The 1830 census shows that there were twenty-eight African American families living in Marion County. James Divita, through a study of ethnic settlement patterns in Indiana, notes that “from its very inception Indianapolis has had black residents.”⁴²²

That black residents were in Marion County from the beginning is a significant factor when examining the new tensions that emerged after the arrival of the railroad. Early residents of Marion County recalled stories of fights between whites and blacks. One recollection by William Holloway, an early resident and future city historian, stated that a battle between Dave Burkhardt’s “chain gang” and the black residents of town was inevitable, as Burkhardt’s gang did the same ditch and well-digging often associated with African-American or Irish laborers. As told by Holloway, “The feud culminated in a collision with Old man Overall a negro of rather a plucky disposition who had some sons as willing to fight as any white man could be and who lived on the open common near the present line of Ohio street east of the military park. The chain gang gave out that they meant to go for the Overalls on a certain night and the negro gathered his forces, barricaded doors and windows, loaded guns, and prepared for a siege. The assailants made a demonstration before the colored fortress but a few shots and the formidable preparations warned them off and the warfare resulted in a victory for the negroes.”⁴²³

⁴²² James J. Divita, “Ethnics in Indiana between Statehood and the Civil War, 1816 to 1860” (no publisher info), 1988.

⁴²³ William Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870), 53.

Ultimately, these stories show that although there was racial tension in the region from the very beginning, only after the railroad was completed in 1847 did residents begin to seek more powerful solutions to the issue of outsiders in central Indiana.

During the period of extreme social and economic change that filled the antebellum era, Hoosiers debated whether they wished to allow free immigration into the county. Erik C. Wade has argued that the issue of slavery and the threat of African-Americans to white free labor was so troubling to Hoosiers that they wanted to settle the issue during their “moment of reimagining” as they revised the state constitution. For Wade, “the new constitution in 1851 was a commitment to neutralizing the subject of slavery by ending the institution in Indiana and, at the same time, advancing white political rights and prioritizing white labor as a vehicle toward economic independence.”⁴²⁴ It was a reimagining of Indiana as a place where white men would not compete against slaves for jobs or land.

The Constitution of 1851 shows the statewide anxiety aroused by increased mobility. In Marion County, however, the best example of the anxiety aroused by the arrival of the outsiders is seen in the formation of the Eagle Creek Marion County Horse Thief Detective Agency. On January 21st, 1850, the state Senate of Indiana ratified a charter for the Eagle Creek Marion County Horse Thief Detective Agency. The agency, formed because “crime of all descriptions and particularly horse-stealing and house breaking have lately in many parts of the State been committed with unaccustomed daring,” sought to create a sense of control for residents of the Indiana capital. The anxiety emerged from a feeling that, as the agency charter stated, “these offences are

⁴²⁴ Erik C. Wade, “Constituting Whiteness: The National Horse Thief Detective Association and Racial Mores in Indiana, 1850-1930” (Ph.D. Diss., Purdue University, 2011), 28.

committed by organized companies of daring and desperate men whose vigilance and secret communications with each other, enable them to evade the slow and more public process of the law.”⁴²⁵

Obviously, horse theft was a major issue because of their economic necessity as an instrument of pioneer life. Rather than just a crime against a beloved animal, horses were crucial for farmers as both a tool of transportation and agriculture. Paul Salstrom notes that horses were the preferred stock of Indiana farmers emerging along with mechanization as early mechanical plows required faster speeds to operate the gears. Between 1840 and 1860, the number of oxen in Indiana dropped 88 percent. In the 1850s alone, horses in Indiana increased by 65 percent.⁴²⁶ The significance of losing a horse on the frontier—especially an unpopulated one—could mean failure, as crops could not get planted or spoil before being harvested, not to mention loss of marketability due to lack of transportation. Oliver Johnson noted that his family used their horse to take corn to the grist mill every ten days, since milling larger amounts would lead to spoilage.⁴²⁷ Losing a horse in the antebellum era was at least as damaging to an individual as grand theft auto in today’s world because of the tight window between grinding, spoiling, and running out of meal. The significance of horse theft raises the question of why the ECMCHTDA emerged in 1850.

⁴²⁵ “Constitution of the Eagle Creek Marion Co. Horse Thief Detecting Company” (Indianapolis: Ellis & Spamm, Printers, 1850). The legislative law is originally seen in *Local Laws of Indiana Passed at the Thirty-Fourth Meeting of the General Assembly*, (Indianapolis: John D. Defrees & Co., 1850), 142.

⁴²⁶ Paul Salstrom, *From Pioneering to Persevering: Family Farming in Indiana to 1880* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007), 98.

⁴²⁷ Oliver Johnson, *A Home in the Woods: Reminiscences of Early Marion County* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1951), 190.

Horse theft was an issue that could spark tensions among the population of the Hoosier capital from the very beginning of white settlement. George Pogue, the first permanent white settler in the region, went to search for some stolen horses in 1819 and lost his life in the process. Popular accounts note that Pogue, hoping to recover his lost livestock, followed a Native American named Wyandotte John into the woods and never returned. Local suspicion suggested that Pogue was killed for his accusation that local Natives were stealing pioneer horses. While never confirmed, the legend of Pogue's murder is an important event in the city's early historical memory. It is the first murder in town, and was never officially solved. That local lore recalls that he was murdered by Native Americans shows that Hoosiers were leery of people from different cultures and felt that they represented danger to Euro-American settlement.⁴²⁸

Pogue's murder was not the only example of outsiders being targeted as a criminal element without proof. In 1830, an advertisement promised a reward of ten dollars for the return of a horse probably stolen by a black prisoner who escaped the Marion County Jail the same night. The notice promised no money for the capture of the suspect.⁴²⁹ While the coincidence is certainly suspicious, there was no other evidence that suggested the escaped prisoner was the one who stole the horse. Gangs of white thieves were active in the area at the time, including the aforementioned thief and general ruffian Dave Burkhart, whose gang supported itself by "stealing their neighbors, corn, pigs, poultry and potatoes...and not unfrequently robbing outright."⁴³⁰ The focus on the

⁴²⁸ The story of George Pogue is a popular one. This telling comes from John H. B. Nowland, *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis* (Indianapolis: Sentinel Book and Job Printing House, 1870), 20-22.

⁴²⁹ *Indiana Democrat*, 4 September 1830.

⁴³⁰ John H.B. Nowland, *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis* (Indianapolis: Sentinel Book and Job Printing House, 1870), 177-180. The quote regarding Burkhart and his gang is from William Holloway,

escaped black prisoner suggests that the community was especially attentive to people of non-European descent and their effect on local crime.

The significant part of the story about the African American thief relates to the amount of the reward and knowledge of the accused's identity. The reward for the horse stolen by the black man was ten dollars. No one wanted the thief caught or returned for punishment. The advertiser simply wanted the horse returned. Hoosiers in the early days were wary of outsiders, but seemed more concerned with maintaining their livelihoods than establishing a racially or culturally based social order. However, a concurrent advertisement signed by John Tipton reveals a more telling layer to the tensions surrounding horse theft in the first decade of settlement. It gives the description of a stolen horse from a Marion County farm and states that a *fifty* dollar reward will be paid "for the horse and the thief, or for the thief alone."⁴³¹ The high reward suggests that major anxieties emerged in the community when members did not know who they could trust. The accused black thief was a known social quantity and would likely never return to the community. As such, the community did not have to worry about being swindled or robbed by the same person ever again. The mystery of who stole the second horse created such an issue of trust in the community that the owner was willing to pay fifty dollars just to know who the thief was rather than getting the horse back. Community security was something far more important than just getting back the initial animal because if left undiscovered, the same thief could strike again and again at will creating an intense sense of dread among neighbors.

Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870), 53.

⁴³¹ *Indiana Democrat*, 28 August 1830.

As noted above, Hoosiers were focused on knowing who could be trusted in their community. Before the late 1840s, few outsiders existed in the state capital. Unlike major cities like New York, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Paris, or London, central Indiana Hoosier eyes were not “veiled mirrors” as noted by Walter Benjamin in *Arcades Projects*.⁴³² The lack of a navigable river kept population of the city and all of Marion County quite low in pure numbers and overall density.⁴³³ While the lack of population density would have provided many havens for horse thieves, the communal nature of living on the frontier prevented them from blending anonymously into the local background.

The sense of community, however, seemed under attack in the 1840s as local newspapers initiated crime columns during the decade and began reporting on grisly murders that happened around the country and world to drive up readership.⁴³⁴ They also printed increasing numbers of articles declaring the breakdown of society in the local community. For instance, an 1845 article in the *Indiana State Sentinel* lamented that “the moral influence of a dozen churches is not sufficient to check the vicious propensities of our population.”⁴³⁵ The “vicious propensities” of residents were also a concern to Calvin Fletcher. His search for moral order focused on various issues, but the biggest was the temperance movement. During one election in 1847, he noted that “the moral part of the

⁴³² Walter Benjamin, “Arcades Project” in *The Blackwell City Reader*, Ed. Gary Bridge et al. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 119-125. For an example of this theory applied to New York City, see Karen Haltunnen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

⁴³³ The population of Indianapolis in 1840 was only 2,695 and Marion County as a whole was 16,080.

“Historical Census Browser” University of Virginia Library, Retrieved February 2, 2016.

⁴³⁴ David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 7, 163-164.

⁴³⁵ *Indiana State Sentinel*, July 9, 1845.

community had not organized but the wicked had. I went to the poles soon learned that the vilest had taken possession of them.”⁴³⁶ For residents of Indianapolis, the breakdown of society was already underway well before the railroad reached the city.

The arrival of so many outsiders and the perceived increase in crime forced residents to take matters into their own hands. The ECMCHTDA emerged as a paramilitary organization designed to “deliver over to the civil authorities without a warrant any person against whom there are circumstances of strong suspicion and guilt” of horse theft or other crimes.⁴³⁷ Without any evidence other than suspicion of guilt, residents of the ECMCHTDA seized the opportunity to fill the role of the not yet fully functional police in protecting the property of the region.⁴³⁸ They grasped the occasion to feel powerful during a period of massive socio-economic change.⁴³⁹

The rise of the ECMCHTDA is not surprising when examining the membership signees in the original constitution. The vast majority of the members were farmers who lived near each other and interacted closely with other members and their families. The Pughs, Hollingsworths, Barnhills, Wilsons, Martindales, Faucetts and Hardings all interacted in a very tight social network that spanned across kin networks, mutual farm

⁴³⁶ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 3* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1974), 364.

⁴³⁷ Constitution of the Eagle Creek Marion Co. Horse Thief Detecting Company (Indianapolis: Ellis & Spamm, Printers, 1850).

⁴³⁸ The Marion County Police Department was relatively ineffective until the Civil War due to the Democratic Party’s insistence on keeping taxes low for anything other than the most necessary functions. See David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 89. The Marion County Sheriff’s Office was equally understaffed and was based on a volunteer system before the Civil War. See David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 971-972.

⁴³⁹ David Bodenhamer provides a similar explanation of why Hoosiers created their own vigilante societies in David Bodenhamer, “Crime and Criminal Justice in Antebellum Indianapolis” (PhD Diss., Indiana University, 1977), p 97.

aid and estate executorships. These families had all moved to the region by 1830 and many were active in local government. For instance, James Miller, Martin Martindale, Isaac Pugh, and other members of the ECMCHTDA were appointed as road viewers by the Marion County Commissioners in November, 1823, and Asa B. Strong was a Wayne Township sheriff for nearly two decades.⁴⁴⁰ For them, the success of the railroad should have brought agricultural prosperity. While it did bring economic success, it also brought outsiders who threatened the moral order of the community.

The residents of the ECMCHTDA were long-standing residents of Marion County. The inadequacy of sources in rural communities is well known, but a reasonable examination of records shows that nearly half of the members bought land in the county before 1836 and the majority of those purchases were before 1830. For instance, Robert Barnhill, Sr. bought land in Marion County on July 19, 1821. Samuel Harding purchased land in Township 15 North, Range 3 East, Section 6 on July 20, 1821. John Miller bought land the same day in an adjoining section, and the Pugh family began their significant land purchases in 1828 next door to Miller.⁴⁴¹ Berry Sulgrove noted that several important members of the ECMCHTDA were early settlers of the Eagle Creek region of Marion County, including the Barnhills, Corbaleys, and Robert Harding.⁴⁴²

Family kin networks settled in the area suggesting that these Hoosiers were looking for economic safety when they arrived. Robert Barnhill's son Robert Barnhill, Jr. purchased land in a neighboring township in 1828. Six years later, in 1834, John C.

⁴⁴⁰ *Commissioners' Record, Vol. 1, 1822-1827* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).

⁴⁴¹ Jane E. Darlington, *Marion County, Indiana Records Miscellanea* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Historical Society, 1986).

⁴⁴² Berry Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts, 1884), 23.

Barnhill bought 160 acres adjoining his father's land in Wayne Township. These members were also tied together through family bonds, as marriages between member families was common. For example, Robert Barnhill, Jr., son of one of the wealthiest members of the ECMCHTDA, married Mary Anne Connaroe, daughter of fellow member Joel Connaroe, in 1847. Henry S. Johnson married fellow member David Varner's daughter Margaret in 1848.⁴⁴³ Samuel and Israel Harding each married one of Jeremiah Johnson's daughters.⁴⁴⁴ These family bonds tied the community together as tightly as possible and, although account books do not survive, the social habits of nineteenth century rural Americans suggests that these people were supportive of each other on their mutual farmsteads as well.⁴⁴⁵

The Marion County Probate Record also shows the close bonds between members of the ECMCHTDA. Family estates of deceased group members were often

⁴⁴³ *The Locomotive*. April 1, 1848.

⁴⁴⁴ John H.B. Nowland, *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis* (Indianapolis: Sentinel Book and Job Printing House, 1870), 24, 26.

⁴⁴⁵ The literature on mutual assistance in nineteenth century farming is quite large. One of the best overviews of the debate over mutual assistance and the transition to capitalism is Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 46 (1989): 122; the classic article on mutual aid being more important than economic gain is James Henretta, "'Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35 (1978): p 3-32; the opposition to Henretta is Winifried Rothenberg, "The Emergence of Farm Labor Markets and the Transformation of the Rural Economy" *Journal of Economic History* 48 (1988): 537-566. The best book that examines the issues social and economic change is Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). One of the best overviews of the relationship between families, mutual assistance and economic goals in early America is Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 47 (1990): pp. 3-29. For women's experiences with mutual aid, see Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: University of Connecticut Press, 1986); Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988). Martin Brueghel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) is also a strong examination of how economic changes in the Atlantic World economy brought social transformations during the antebellum era.

administered by someone outside the family when the departed was the head of the household. For instance, when Stephen Gullifer passed in 1835, his wife Elizabeth was the legal administratrix but decided to have Stephen's son Aaron, who was then assisted by future ECMCHTDA member Adam Wright and father of four other members, Lephraim Hollingsworth. These members also lived within a mile of each other in Wayne and Pike Townships on the west side of the county. John Dollarhide's wife relinquished her legal rights to administer the estate to neighbor David Kime, another member of the ECMCHTDA.⁴⁴⁶

The ECMCHTDA was supposed to protect society from the dangers of horse thieves and outsiders. Their rules of admission betrayed their feelings toward those who were not well-known to the entire community. The "Application and Qualification for Membership" noted that only free white men were allowed in and that they "be of a man of good moral character."⁴⁴⁷ Member proposals were relatively open, but members were left to be judicious judges of character before offering any sponsorship. The constitution stated that "Any member may propose a candidate for initiation; but it is particularly enjoined on all that they shall not, from any motives of favor, affection, or interest whatever, propose any one whose general character will not bear the strictest scrutiny... In every instance when any member shall willfully disregard this injunction he shall forfeit the sum of five dollars for the use of the company."⁴⁴⁸ Obviously, members

⁴⁴⁶ Marion County, Probate Complete Record, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁴⁴⁷ Constitution of the Eagle Creek Marion Co. Horse Thief Detecting Company (Indianapolis: Ellis & Spamm, Printers, 1850).

⁴⁴⁸ Constitution of the Eagle Creek Marion Co. Horse Thief Detecting Company (Indianapolis: Ellis & Spamm, Printers, 1850).

of the ECMCHTDA were concerned about the character of their company and did not want it to become a social club open to the public.

The moral character was judged by the members of the group through a difficult voting process where two no votes (out of 90) would require a defense of the potential member and three or more banned them from ever applying again. However, once admitted, the society provided a strong vision of egalitarianism. “All members of this company are equal in social rights; and no one shall be entitled to exclusive emolument or privileges.”⁴⁴⁹ In addition, members had an obligation to fight for the rights of other members in case of theft. When any crime was committed against any member of the group, “he, or the officers as the case may be, shall call any number of men that may be thought necessary for the pursuit.”⁴⁵⁰ Amongst many other requirements, members were required to “hold himself in readiness to go in search or pursuit of any person or property when called on...and to obey said call by going and using every means in his power to accomplish the object of the call.”⁴⁵¹ The significance of the ECMCHTDA is clear. Hoosiers were experiencing a widening anxiety regarding social ties during a period of drastic infrastructural changes. As a result, they created a community-based institution that had semi-legal power to defend their property in case the need arose.

The effect of this HTDA is not clear from the historical record. The only pamphlet ever published for the ECMCHTDA discussed the purpose and rules of the organization. However, HTDAs formed quickly throughout central Indiana at the same

⁴⁴⁹ Constitution of the Eagle Creek Marion Co. Horse Thief Detecting Company (Indianapolis: Ellis & Spamm, Printers, 1850).

⁴⁵⁰ Constitution of the Eagle Creek Marion Co. Horse Thief Detecting Company (Indianapolis: Ellis & Spamm, Printers, 1850).

⁴⁵¹ Constitution of the Eagle Creek Marion Co. Horse Thief Detecting Company (Indianapolis: Ellis & Spamm, Printers, 1850).

time the ECMCHTDA was formed. The Regulators, a group of detectives from Noble County in northern Indiana that formed in 1852, were so prominent that they wrote their own history in 1859. Their words follow the concerns of the ECMCHTDA, noting that since its very inception, “the county of Noble had become so notorious...that honest traveling from here to other sections of the country were ashamed to own from whence they came.”⁴⁵²

HTDAs have a long history of appearing in sparsely populated regions that focus on agriculture.⁴⁵³ The low population—usually caused by poor transportation infrastructure and connection to markets—prevented the formation of full-time police forces that could investigate property crimes. The lack of a police force made the resident population an easier target for bandits because of the lack of specialization needed to study criminal habits. As a result, the local residents, usually with state authority, formed systems of protection that allow them to band together as a community to protect their property.

What is significant about the formation of these HTDAs is that they are overwhelmingly a feature of frontier society. As scholars like Warren Elofson have suggested, comparing frontiers and borderlands have a significant ability to tell about commonalities between time and space. He argues that “similarly high levels of lawlessness and disorder characterized the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century cattle ranching frontiers” in western Canada and the Northern Territory in Australia. He

⁴⁵² M.H. Mott, *History of the Regulators of Northern Indiana*, (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Company Printers, 1859), 5.

⁴⁵³ Warren Elofson, “The Universality of Frontier Disorder: Northern Australia Viewed Against the Northern Great Plains of North America” *Agricultural History* 88 (2014): 147-174.

suggests that, even though those regions had very different characteristics, “frontier conditions...were strikingly similar.”⁴⁵⁴ As Elofson posits, the frontier emerges and residents become targets of thieves because they lack the formal structures of power that attempt to prevent theft due to a sparse population. As the frontier fades, formal police forces take the place of HTDAs in criminal apprehension because the local population can afford the cost of specialization. This dissertation supports his argument. The HTDAs may remain, but they take on a significantly different meaning. For instance, Dedham, Mass., had an HTDA form in 1816 and another formed in Brookline, Mass., in 1819.⁴⁵⁵ Indiana HTDAs were common occurrences during the middle of the nineteenth century as railroads emerged across the land to create a new frontier. THE ECMCHTDA, formed in 1850, was one example and the Regulators of Noble County, formed in 1852, was another. Those were just a few of the myriad HTDAs founded during the period of expanding frontier regions. Various others emerged at the same time, with the same mission espoused by the ECMCHTDA. They were precursors to the HTDAs and vigilante societies of the Far West, but the mission was founded on similar social structures and is one more example of the comparative frontier experience across time and space.

⁴⁵⁴ Warren Elofson, “The Universality of Frontier Disorder: Northern Australia Viewed Against the Northern Great Plains of North America” *Agricultural History* 88 (2014): 147-174.

⁴⁵⁵ The Massachusetts Historical Society’s online search tool shows at least three horse thief detective agencies from 1800-1819. See http://balthazaar.masshist.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?Search_Arg=horse+thieves&Search_Code=FT*&PID=b8TN3gpSF-BaOx6TwL2jsKcmEv184&SEQ=20160217124403&CNT=10&HIST=1 Retrieved February 17, 2016. “Constitution of the Society in Dedham for Apprehending Horse Thieves,” Massachusetts Historical Society; “Constitution of the Society in Roxbury, Brookline and Brighton for Apprehending Horse Thieves,” Massachusetts Historical Society.

From 1847 to 1852, Marion County was a crucible of change. Residents certainly could expect finer and cheaper finished goods. Rural residents got significantly higher prices for their agricultural crops. Hoosiers also began slowly improving their farms to produce more output. They were also finally able to reach the foreign markets they sought for over a quarter century. Hoosiers were active participants in feeding Irish and German poor during the potato famine and the revolutions of 1848, which spurred even higher prices for their goods. However, residents of Marion County also acquired an infrastructure that allowed large numbers of socio-cultural outsiders to cheaply come to their booming city. The telescoped growth of the city created massive opportunities, but the opportunities presented themselves to everyone. Almost at once, it seemed to Hoosiers, Irish and German residents descended on the city like a scourge. They fought, drank and caroused in a way that was unacceptable to the social proclivities of previous settlers. African Americans were such an affront to laborers that they were banned in 1851 during a period of drastic infrastructural change. As a result, rural Hoosiers turned to vigilante societies like the ECMCHTDA as a way to maintain the social order of their region during a period of drastic social change. The structural changes of the transportation revolution were not complete, but Marion County Hoosiers, for the first time, experienced what it was like to be part of a larger world.

CHAPTER 7: “THE PLACE WHERE THE WAYS MEET:” INDIANAPOLIS DEVELOPS A HINTERLAND, 1853-1860⁴⁵⁶

The arrival of the railroad in 1847 caused a surge in economic activity in Marion County. In 1846, Indianapolis remained an urban outpost without any sphere of economic influence outside of its immediate surroundings. When the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad finally reached the city, its success drew other investors to the cause of transportation connectivity and, by 1853, no less than eight railroads converged on the city. Washington Street, the long-sleepy central avenue of the city bustled with activity not seen since the passage of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill. Residents of the city were able to buy goods produced around the world right in the city without ordering from Cincinnati or Louisville.⁴⁵⁷ By 1855, farmers could send their agricultural products directly to New York markets via rail and steamboat passage through the Great Lakes and along the Erie Canal.⁴⁵⁸ Hoosiers in Marion County also reopened their agricultural society with the goal of improving their stock.⁴⁵⁹ The increasing economic activity and swell in population led to a boom period for local residents. The old families of the early years like the Fletchers, Hollingsworths, Barnhills, and Wilsons finally attained the ability to reach the outside markets that promised to bring economic security to their families.

⁴⁵⁶ A.C. Howard's *Directory for the City of Indianapolis* (Indianapolis: A.C. Howard, 1857), 52.

⁴⁵⁷ Newspaper advertisements like those seen in the *Indiana* show that Hoosiers were increasingly able to access foreign or eastern-made goods relatively easily. See *Daily State Sentinel*, August 1, 1853; *Daily Indiana State Sentinel*, March 11, 1854; *Daily State Sentinel*, June 3, 1859. James Madison argues that railroads allowed eastern manufactured goods to move to the city in large numbers after 1847 but asserts that New York goods overtook the central Indiana market during the 1850s. See James Madison, "Businessmen and the Business Community in Indianapolis, 1820-1860" (PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1972), 171-177.

⁴⁵⁸ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 430.

⁴⁵⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 5.

The city also experienced a physical evolution. In October of 1853, Thomas A. Morris completed the first Union Station in the United States a half mile south of the city center. The Union Depot drew businesses like J.R. Osgood's woodworking factory, located one block south of the station, or L.W. Hasselman's foundry, located across the street from the station away from Washington Street for the first time. By 1860, the industrial section of the city grew rapidly toward the south and east of the city center, reflecting the significance of the railroad to local manufacturing. The same period also witnessed the growth of neighborhoods north of the downtown districts. Wealthy residents retreated to neighborhoods on the north side of town to escape the bustle and danger of the newly lively city.⁴⁶⁰ These changes during the 1850s demonstrate the speed with which central Indiana Hoosiers caught up to the urban evolution occurring in water-based areas like Cincinnati or Rochester, New York. Paul Johnson argues that the social pattern of Rochester evolved during the period from 1827 to 1834 as employers sequestered their home lives from their manufactories but that they "continued to consider themselves the rightful protectors as governors of their city."⁴⁶¹ Walter Glazer suggests that changes in urban social landscape of Cincinnati were of similar speed. He states that during the 1830s "the cultural and economic organization of the city began to change" as immigrants altered the demographic makeup of the city and the improved economy "created a more specialized and stratified occupational and economic

⁴⁶⁰ The Old Northside Historic Neighborhood is one example of this trend. See Albert E. Dickens, "The Growth and Structure of Real Property Uses in Indianapolis" (Bloomington: Indiana School of Business, 1939), 27-28; David Bodenhamer, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1064.

⁴⁶¹ Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 61.

hierarchy.”⁴⁶² The developments occurred during such an abbreviated period were mirrored by the experience of Indianapolis. This suggests that the process of urbanization was influenced more by market connectivity than by the length of time cities were established.

These changes were not all positive. The 1856 address to the State Board of Agriculture by Judge Samuel Perkins’ e stated blithely that “The days of early simplicity, of backwoods enjoyment and suffering...destitution of a market for surplus produce, and isolated living...have indeed mostly passed away in Marion county.”⁴⁶³ However, as noted in the previous chapter, the successes of the improved economy brought about unforeseen consequences for residents. Hinting at the tension created by connecting to external markets, Perkins remarked that “Whether for better or for worse, whether bringing a greater degree of happiness or otherwise...I need not intimate...it is enough for my present purpose that the [economic] change mentioned is taking place, and cannot be arrested” acknowledging the significance of the new transportation system was the driving force of social tension.⁴⁶⁴

Connected to these developments, the arrival of newcomers during the rush of the 1840s and the continued surge during the 1850s—Marion County’s 65% rate of population increase from 1850-1860 was, by far, higher than any other county referenced in this study—sustained the whirlwind of social turmoil absent during the 1820s and 1830s.⁴⁶⁵ Locals, instead of sorting out problems individually or through kin networks,

⁴⁶² Walter Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840: The Social and Functional Organization of an Urban Community during the Pre-Civil War Period* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 84.

⁴⁶³ *Fourth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: William J. Brown, 1856), 389.

⁴⁶⁴ *Fourth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: William J. Brown, 1856), 390.

⁴⁶⁵ *Seventh US Census; Eighth US Census*.

created secret societies and public civic groups to prevent the spread of non-English Protestant culture.⁴⁶⁶ The creation of a formal police force stemmed Irish violence. Hoosiers ardently challenged German beer-drinking culture to reestablish a strong temperance atmosphere which further mirrors the developments seen in Paul Johnson's work during a period of intense market orientation. Most tellingly, the anxiety of an era of movement was seen in the passage of the Constitution of 1851, which barred black people from moving into the state. The problems of increased access to transportation networks also demanded solutions, but police and fire departments needed to be paid and equipped, temperance and exclusion laws needed to be enforced, and market regulations needed officers and tools to ensure equitable trade.

Merchants also created their own economic sphere of influence that reached into the central Indiana hinterland in a meaningful way. By 1860, the city of Indianapolis functioned as an economic depot that competed with Cincinnati and Chicago for regional trade. Local manufacturers and merchants began advertising their goods as wholesalers to nearby merchants rather than dealing directly with customers. Elliot West notes that frontier cities possess several characteristics in common including "unusually unsettled conditions and fluid possibilities, the ready availability of unexploited land and the lack of well-established legal and political systems."⁴⁶⁷ The uptick in the various developments mentioned above over the period from 1853-1860 show that Hoosiers in central Indiana were in the middle of the kind of telescoped growth seen across the

⁴⁶⁶ See previous chapter discussion on the rise of the Eagle Creek Marion County Horse Thief Detective Agency.

⁴⁶⁷ Elliot West, "Grain Kings, Rubber Dreams, and Stock Exchanges: How Transportation and Communication Changed Frontier Cities," in *Frontier Cities: Encounters at the Crossroads of Empire*, ed. By Jay Gitlin et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 112.

frontier in western cities after the Civil War. Marion County residents experienced explosive growth rarely experienced by eastern cities in the early 19th century because cities like Cincinnati, Louisville or Pittsburgh lacked characteristics mentioned by West. Those cities slowly emerged as river transportation improved but grew too large to adapt railroad transportation as effectively as a less-settled region like Marion County.

The 1860 census provides evidence of the kind of growth seen in Marion County during the 1850s. In the 1850s, Indianapolis reaped the advantages of the railroad at a faster pace than cities with established water networks. Examples of development include percentage of improved land. Marion County lagged behind counties in the more developed, southern portion of the state. By 1860, the amount of improved land in Marion County skyrocketed into first place in the state and, while remaining behind those in other regions of the United States, was significantly closer than in 1850.⁴⁶⁸ Farm prices show a similar trajectory. Marion County land was the second most expensive in the state in 1860—after Wayne County—and also had the second highest rate of increase in land value—behind Lake County, near Chicago. Dearborn County—near Cincinnati—land had the smallest rate of increase of the examined Indiana counties. The average cash value per farm also moved into the range seen in the other examined regions of the United States but the rate of increase from 1850 to 1860 surged past longer settled regions to do so.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ See Appendix B for fuller analysis of data from the US Census.

⁴⁶⁹ See Appendix B for census data and rates of increase.

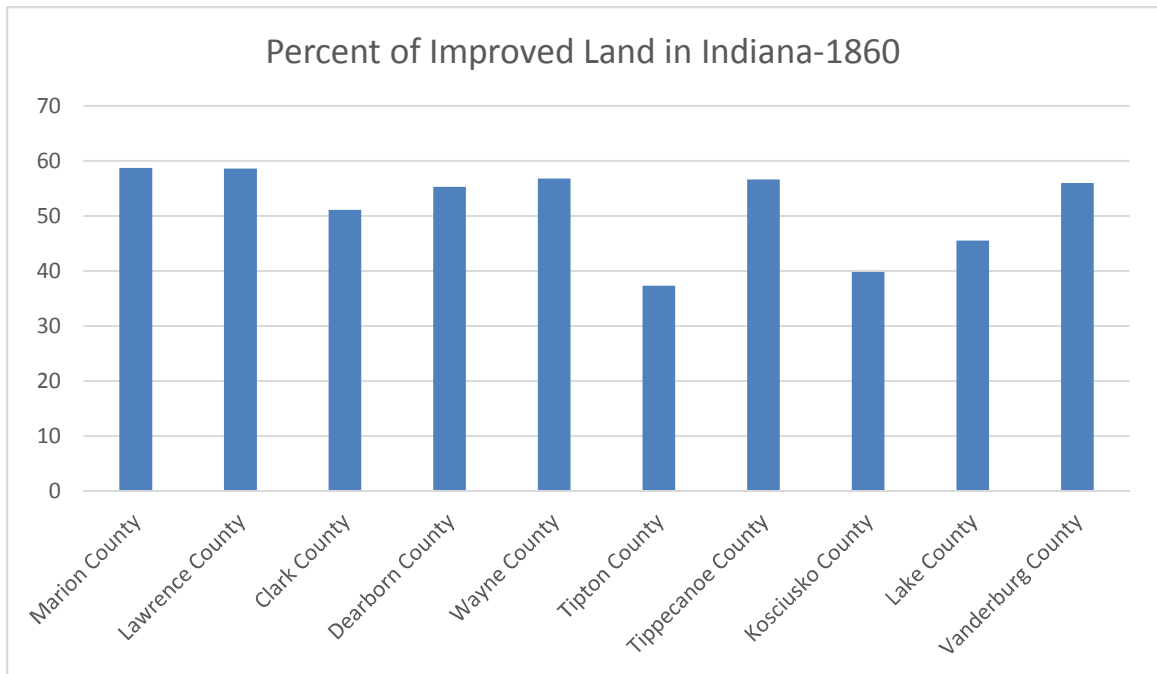


Figure 1: Percent of Improved Land in Indiana-1860

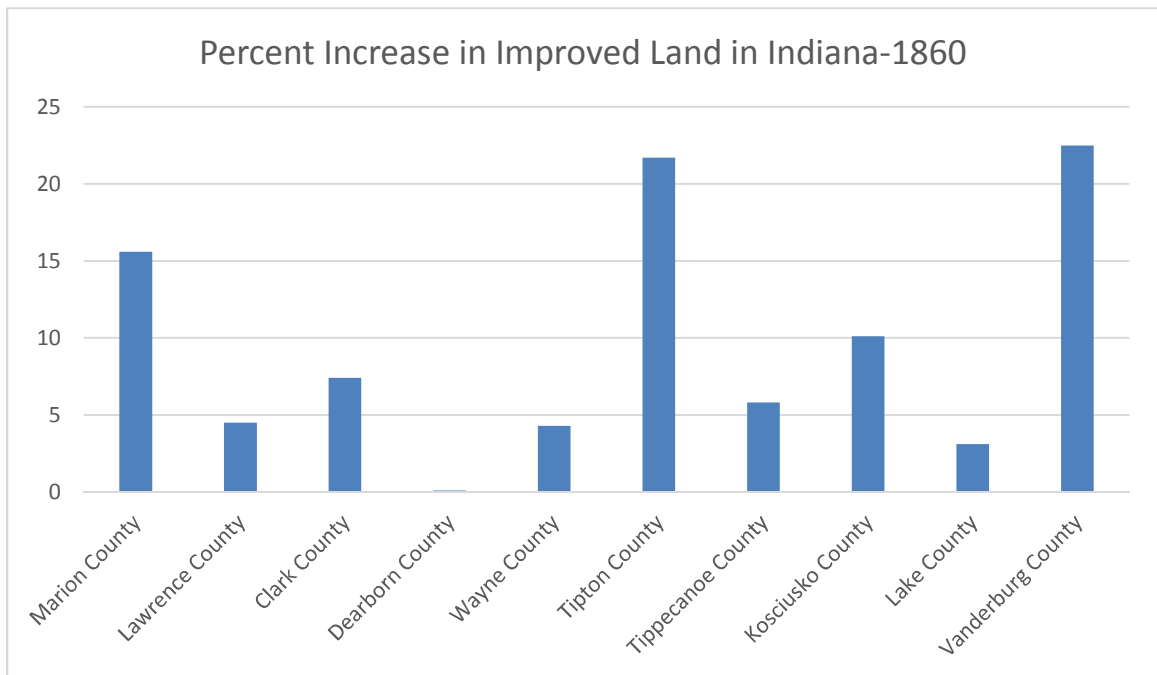


Figure 2: Percent Increase in Improved Land in Indiana-1860

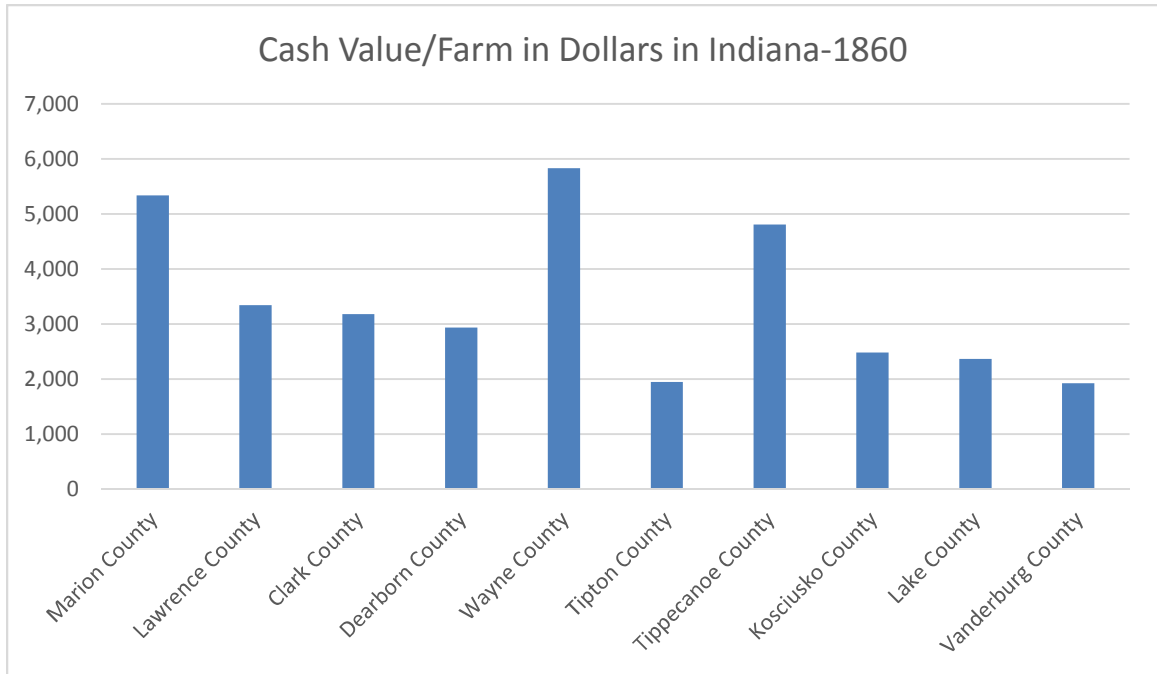


Figure 3: Percent of Improved Land in United States-1860

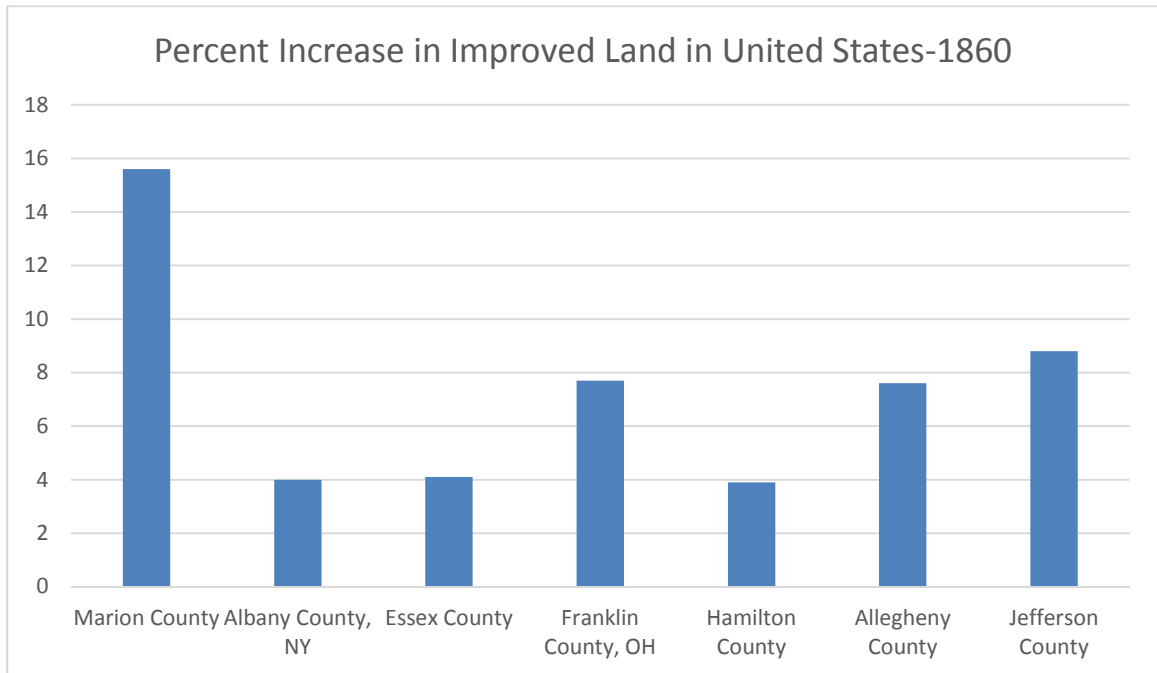


Figure 4: Percent Increase in Improved Land in United States-1860

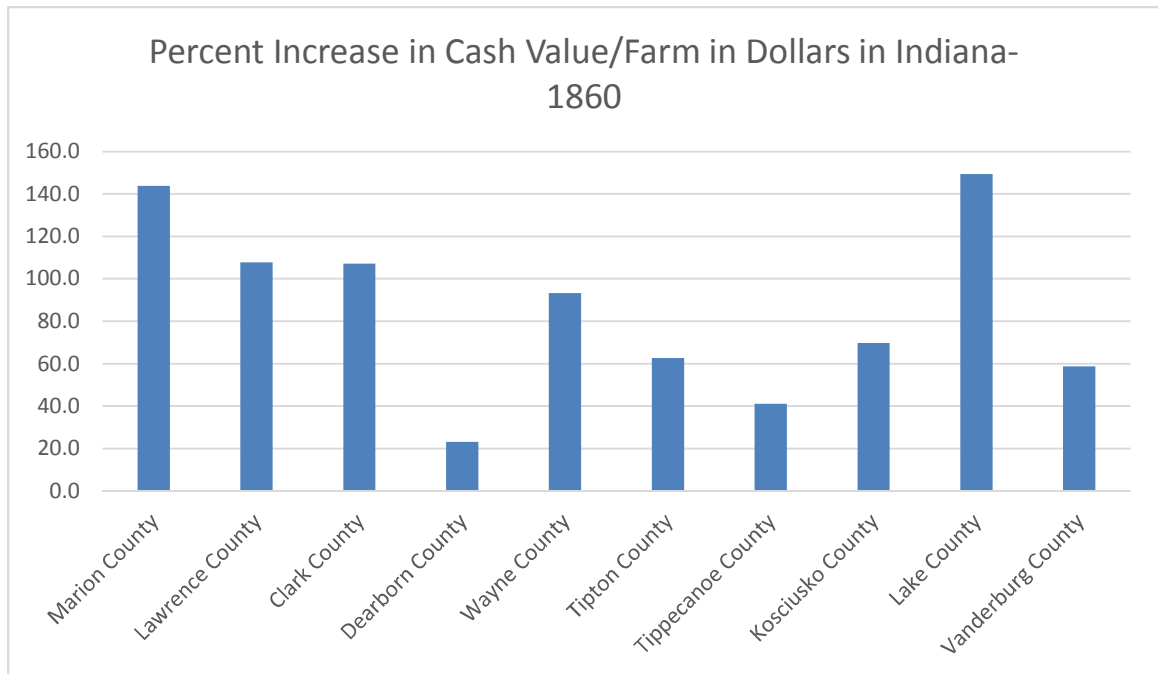


Figure 5: Percent Increase in Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in Indiana-1860

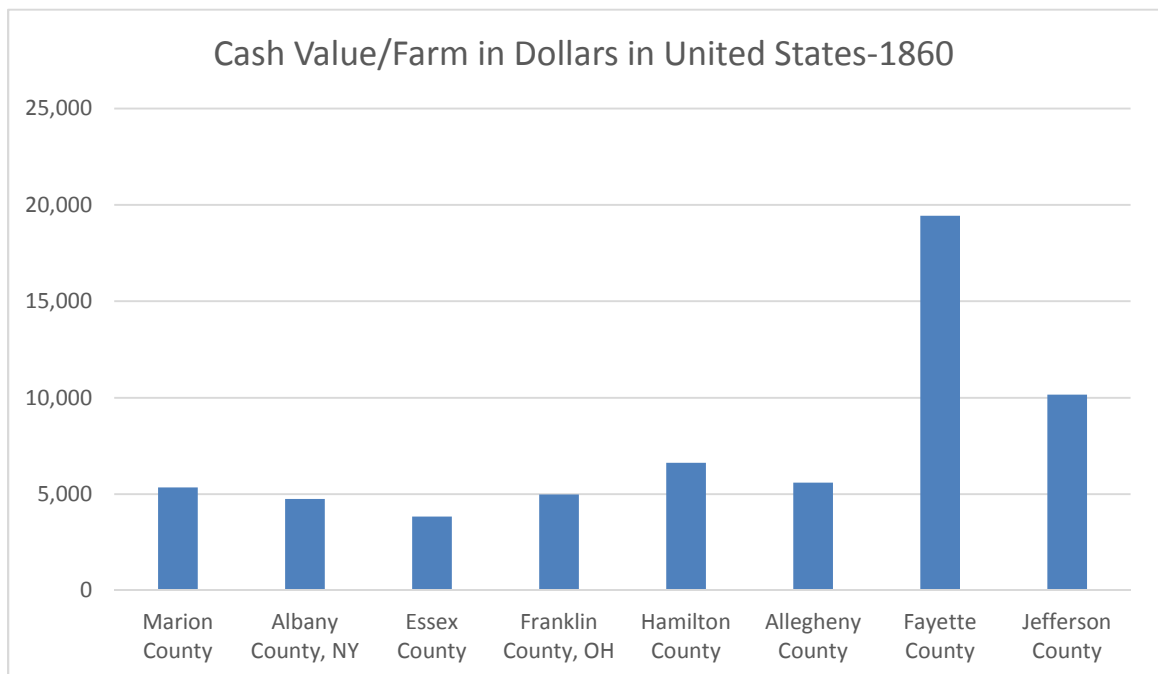


Figure 6: Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in United States-1860

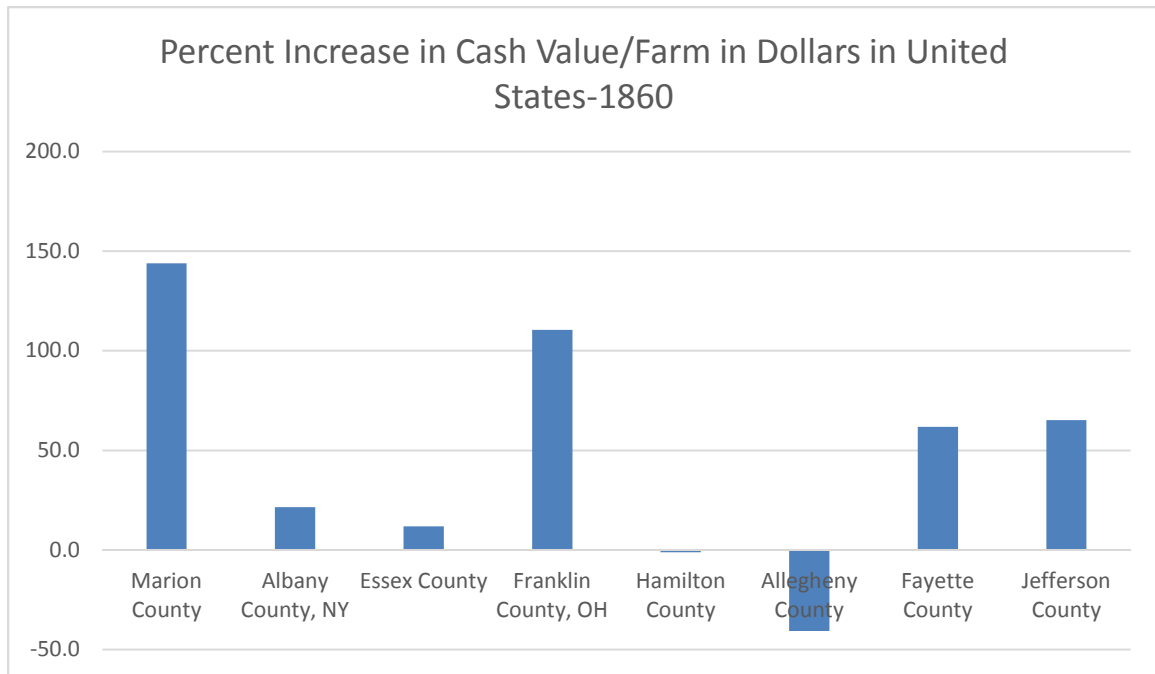


Figure 7: Percent Increase in Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in United States-1860

Similar patterns appeared in value of farms per acre, value in farms per improved acre, percent increase in land value per acre, and percent increase in land value per improved acre. Marion County also showed its increasing similarity to the agricultural development of other large cities of the United States. Nearly every other regional county measured in this study increased in the overall number of farms while simultaneously decreasing average farm size. This suggests that farmers in Marion County were beginning to experience the same kind of development patterns seen in the Northeast as families adapted to the reality of larger families and limited land availability. The patterns stated above reflect a general trend that existed in the rest of the agricultural statistics examined in this study for the period 1850-1860. Longer settled counties in the southern Ohio River Valley or on the Wabash River in northern Indiana experienced a longer and slower development than those far removed from waterways in the northern

part of the state. From the period 1850-1860, Indiana's southern counties like Dearborn, Clark, and Lawrence were vastly outpaced by Marion, Tipton, and Kosciusko in the north.

Crop production also increased rapidly during this period. In Marion County, as in many other places, the agricultural census shows a steep rise in crop production in the decade after rail access was solidified. Corn production in Marion County increased by 85.7% through the 1840s as the railroad moved into the region and Hoosiers had access to exterior markets and by another 37.5% by 1860. This expansion in production was not matched by an increase in improved farmland, which only increased 15.6% from 1850-1860.⁴⁷⁰ Other crops also increased dramatically during this period. Bushels of wheat increased by 200.1% and bushels of oats increased by 23.8% during the 1850s. These figures, taken together, suggest an explosion of growth and crop intensification seen in few other counties in this study. The northern counties of Tipton, Kosciusko and Lake were only ones comparative to the kind of growth seen in Marion County.⁴⁷¹ The growth—relative to other cities during this period—shows that the Panic of 1837, while hampering immediate development in the city, helped Indianapolis avoid the trap of tying its economy to water-based transportation systems. Like the phoenix rising from the ashes of Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871 mentioned by Cronon's impressive work *Nature's Metropolis*, the infrastructure of Marion County emerged from the economic

⁴⁷⁰ These figures are derived from the University of Virginia Historical Census Browser at <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/>. Retrieved March 15, 2016.

⁴⁷¹ Lake County's expansion was due to the double emergence of the railroad and the growth of Chicago as a desirable trade center. Their access to Lake Michigan trade routes as well as Chicago markets gave them ample incentive to produce more agricultural products. Tipton and Kosciusko Counties had a similar experience to Marion County, as they telescoped their agricultural development during the 1850s.

disaster of the Panic of 1837 with the ability to build a transportation infrastructure on a relatively blank landscape.⁴⁷² Indianapolis was able to turn its lack of water access to an advantage during the rail era.

Historians have agreed that agriculture changed rapidly during the early 19th century as transportation improvements emerged.⁴⁷³ Large-scale agricultural improvement in Marion County was directly tied to the advent of the railroad. In Marion County, agricultural improvements had a relatively long history. Calvin Fletcher promoted farm enhancements soon after moving to the area. He was a member of the original agricultural society and wanted to make sure that Marion County residents used their soil to maximum benefit. The failure of the early society and the repeated calls to improve output in newspapers implies that many Hoosiers were only partially focused on maximizing their production for market during the 1830s because, as noted in Chapter Two, efficient transportation networks prevented them from increasing the value of their labor. Instead, they were primarily focused on providing a security oriented mode of production that allowed for local trade and flexibility in case of catastrophe.

⁴⁷² William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 345-350.

⁴⁷³ An excellent analysis of how transportation altered the Midwestern agricultural economy is "The Transportation Revolution and Domestic Commerce" in *New Economic View of American History from Colonial Times to 1840*, Ed. by Jeremy Atack and Peter Passel (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 143-174. One recent treatment of agricultural improvement is Peter McClelland, *Sowing Modernity: America's First Agricultural Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Other excellent handlings of agricultural development are seen in Paul Gates, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture, 1815-1860* (M.E. Sharpe, Inc.: New York, 1960); R. Douglas Hurt, *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994); Allan Bogue, *From Prairie to Corn Belt: Farming on the Illinois and Low Prairies in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); Clarence Danhof, *Change in Agriculture: The Northern United States, 1820-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969). David Schob, *Hired Hands and Plow Boys: Farm Labor in the Midwest, 1815-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975); J. Sanford Rikoon, *Threshing in the Midwest, 1820-1940: A Study of Traditional Culture and Technological Change* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Willard Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

In general, Marion County farmers did not alter their market orientation until the mid-1850s. They were content to remain diversified to avoid potential risks associated with specialization. The Marion County Agricultural Society noted in its annual meeting in 1854, “Many of our first farmers appear to be wholly engaged in getting good prices for their produce, but seem to have little desire to attend our agricultural meetings, or lend a helping hand to improvements in agriculture. This will be corroborated by the fact that a premium list of some eight hundred and ninety dollars was made out by the executive committee, and that the amount of the premiums actually awarded to the different competitors is less than five hundred and fifty dollars.”⁴⁷⁴ As noted in the previous chapter, prices jumped drastically after the arrival of the railroad and stayed high for major crops. Hinting at the high prices of the early 1850s, Calvin Fletcher reported that “Feeding corn scarce & can get now 40 cts. Per bushel” and he “hope[s] to get 50 cts. per bushel” in October of 1854.⁴⁷⁵ Corn and wheat prices were high during the early and mid-1850s before the Panic of 1857 and Hoosiers in central Indiana seemed content with the high prices they received following the arrival of the railroad rather than risk investment in technological improvements.⁴⁷⁶

The report from the 1854 meeting indicates that Marion County residents were searching for the best prices for their agricultural goods but were just beginning to take out loans to improve the land. As James Madison notes, the Panic of 1837 left an indelible mark on the psyche of Hoosiers. The “venturesome pioneer generation

⁴⁷⁴ *Fourth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: William J. Brown, 1856), 111.

⁴⁷⁵ Corn prices are listed at forty cents per bushel in Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 275, 282, 284.

⁴⁷⁶ Howard Houk, *A Century of Indiana Farm Prices: 1841-1941* (Lafayette: Purdue University Agricultural Experiment Station, 1943), 50, 61.

contributed to the reluctance of succeeding generations to take similar risks.”⁴⁷⁷ Thus, Hoosiers, rather than invest to take advantage of new market possibilities, were slow to respond to changing economic conditions immediately after the arrival of the railroad. The 1854 report was the first to state that “the general aspect of the improvements in our county is cheering, and every where visible in the increased cultivation of farms in many parts of the county, showing that the earnings of the people are being expended at home, instead of being invested in new tracts to lie unproductive for years to come.”⁴⁷⁸

The report does not explicitly say that Hoosiers took out loans to improve their lands. It is possible that farmers took their profits and drove them back into their own facilities. However, Calvin Fletcher noted that in 1846, “there was but one man Bill Matlock in Hendricks City. that applied in the spring of the year to get money to buy cattle...Now [in 1854] there are some 30 to 50 persons.”⁴⁷⁹ The driving change in the economic approach was a lack of available land. By 1853, only one percent of federal lands were still available for purchase. The rest were owned by residents or speculators which, after the arrival of the railroad, drove prices for land above the federal minimum.⁴⁸⁰ The growth in population and the rise of the railroad made farmland more valuable so speculators bought most of the land by mid-century. The resulting lack of land made improvements on current farms more practical than purchasing increasingly expensive land by the mid-1850s.

⁴⁷⁷ James Madison, *Hoosiers: A New History of Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 85.

⁴⁷⁸ *Fourth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: William J. Brown, 1856), 111.

⁴⁷⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 188-189.

⁴⁸⁰ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1995), 362-368.

Hoosiers also increased their turn toward improved farming methods during the 1850s because of decreasing economic security. Judge Samuel Perkins, speaking in Marion County, argued that Hoosiers should improve their farms or risk socio-economic decline. He argued that farmers, more than mechanics, must be stimulated to produce a surplus because “he can be a careless, negligent, non progressive farmer...and still live, coarsely, slovenly, it may be, but still alive.”⁴⁸¹ The judge contended that “the time has come when an improved system of farming must be...practiced in Marion County...The days of early simplicity...are passing, have indeed mostly passed away in Marion county.”⁴⁸² For Perkins, improvements were necessary, whether Hoosiers liked them or not, stating that “it is a disputed point with some, even, whether savage or civilized life confers most enjoyment...but it is enough for my present purpose that the change mentioned is taking place, and cannot be arrested; for, as a consequence, an improved, careful, neat, laborious system of husbandry, is absolutely necessary to enable the farmers, by increased harvests, to meet the enlarged expenses incident to the new order of things; and he who fails to adopt such, will find himself gradually descending upon a sliding scale.”⁴⁸³ Perkins clearly described that as the region connected to outside markets, comparative advantage became far more important for families seeking economic success. Growing for local consumption no longer provided family subsistence as factory-made products like cloth became cheaper and farmers made decisions to specialize and produce for market, and cease to barter with their neighbors.⁴⁸⁴ As noted

⁴⁸¹ *Fourth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: William J. Brown, 1856), 389.

⁴⁸² *Fourth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: William J. Brown, 1856), 389.

⁴⁸³ *Fourth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: William J. Brown, 1856), 390.

⁴⁸⁴ For one excellent example of this transformation see, Joan Jensen, “Butter Making and Economic Development in Mid-Atlantic America from 1750 to 1850,” *Signs* 13 (1988): 813-829.

above, the choice was an unpleasant one to some farmers. Either increase risk by investing and mechanizing or sacrifice the family future and slide down the economic scale. Just like urbanites in Indianapolis who struggled with labor conflict, rural residents experienced a tension of connecting to external markets.

Fielding Beeler's Marion County Agricultural Society address given in 1856 echoed similar sentiments. He stressed that fellow residents of Marion County had every stimulus to improvement and rhetorically quipped that "when the agricultural interests are marching forward toward that high destiny that awaits them, shall the farmer...of Marion, fold his arms and say, it is enough; let me alone; I can manage my own affairs in my own way."⁴⁸⁵ Beeler responded that farmers, horticulturalists, or others that toil the earth should "fix your standard high" or risk "[passing] through the world unnoticed and unknown, and sink to your graves without a sympathizing tear, or even a stone to mark your earthly resting place."⁴⁸⁶ He finished by remarking on improving soil, crops, implements, and animal husbandry and urging farmers to consider ways to use their resources more effectively.

The railroad also influenced livestock markets in central Indiana during the mid-1850s. Improved breeds of horses were a constant in Indianapolis from the beginning but the railroad finally allowed local farmers to breed animals for export. In the 1853 meeting of the State Board of Agriculture, the board decided to take subscriptions of \$25

⁴⁸⁵ John H. B. Nowland, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wistach, Keys & Co., 1858), 289.

⁴⁸⁶ John H. B. Nowland, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wistach, Keys & Co., 1858), 289-290.

a share to raise \$20,000 for importing quality cattle stock directly from England.⁴⁸⁷ The 1856 annual report of the MCAS noted that “horses commanded high prices during the year; higher perhaps than they ever have done before.”⁴⁸⁸ It continued by noting that “Indianapolis is becoming the leading horse market of the country...the general government has repeatedly been a large purchaser of our animals, for army purposes...Our favorable central position and great railway facilities render us accessible [sic] at all times from all quarters, and our horses therefore go to all points of the compass.”⁴⁸⁹ Cattle breeding also improved in the 1850s. The report stated that cattle improvement “slowly aroused” the interest of local farmers but that “a rapid change is now going on.”⁴⁹⁰ The railroad allowed Hoosier farmers to connect directly to eastern markets for the first time. Calvin Fletcher noted in one 1855 entry that “Calvin [Jr., Fletcher’s son] started Ragin with 100 & odd cattle to N.Y. market—first we ever sent direct.”⁴⁹¹ The same argument was made for sheep. Beeler noted that “sheep are decreasing in number...but this deficiency is more than compensated by the improvement in their quality.”⁴⁹²

One important note of the society described how local markets were adapting to external economic factors. Hinting at the comparative disadvantage of Hoosier sheep

⁴⁸⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 5.

⁴⁸⁸ *Fifth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: Joseph J. Bingham, State Printer, 1858), 231.

⁴⁸⁹ *Fifth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: Joseph J. Bingham, State Printer, 1858), 232.

⁴⁹⁰ *Fifth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: Joseph J. Bingham, State Printer, 1858), 233.

⁴⁹¹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 430.

⁴⁹² *Fifth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: Joseph J. Bingham, State Printer, 1858), 233.

farmers, Beeler offered his opinion on why the number of sheep declined. He stated that “the prime cause being found...that the native breeds produce but little wool, and that of an inferior quality. This wool commands a low price, and the present low price of woolen goods compared with former years makes it tend still downward.”⁴⁹³ Moreover, he commented that “a great rise has taken place in the value of land, farm products and live stock, making the rearing of such scrub sheep, either for wool or mutton, a very unprofitable business.”⁴⁹⁴ These comments are some of the clearest markers that rural society was feeling the effects of the railroad by the mid-1850s. The specialization of farmers to raise fewer, but higher quality, sheep suggests that they were responding to market changes occurring in the larger economy.

By 1854, farmers also began producing beef cattle in Marion County. Calvin Fletcher, in an above quote, noted that in 1846, “there was but one man Bill Matlock in Hendricks City. that applied in the spring of the year to get money to buy cattle...Now [in 1854] there are some 30 to 50 persons.”⁴⁹⁵ Although it is a small number of farmers in the county, the increase in cattle production shows that Marion County farmers were responding to changing market forces caused by the railroad. The previous chapter notes that residents diversified their crops to avoid any market gluts but the remarks of Beeler

⁴⁹³ *Fifth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: Joseph J. Bingham, State Printer, 1858), 234.

⁴⁹⁴ *Fifth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: Joseph J. Bingham, State Printer, 1858), 234.

⁴⁹⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 1* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), 189.

and Fletcher suggest that by 1850s, Hoosiers in central Indiana were responding to market forces by adapting their livestock raising to reflect realities of the market.⁴⁹⁶

The railroad altered property relations for farmers in central Indiana. Charles Post writes that “rising debts and taxes forced Midwestern family farmers to compete as commodity producers in order to maintain their landholding [thus] they were compelled to seek various ways to increase the productivity of labor through mechanization.”⁴⁹⁷ As noted above, the arrival of the railroad created a land boom in Marion County unlike those seen in other regions of the early West. It also experienced a dramatic increase in the value of agricultural implements. In 1850, Marion County ranked fifteenth in the state in terms of value of agricultural implements with just over \$114,000. Wayne, Tippecanoe, and Dearborn Counties all had more in terms of implement values. By 1860, it ranked fourth in the state with nearly \$210,000. Ultimately, the 80% increase in agricultural machinery during the 1850s explains the higher yields much more than increased land improvement or increases in farm labor. Farmers, rather than invest in more laborers tended to invest in machinery to increase their output with less labor.

Calvin Fletcher purchased his first mechanical reaper in June of 1853 to assist with his harvest. By 1854, there seem to be multiple reapers in the region. Fletcher noted that “Calvin [Jr.] came in to attend the mowing machins that are to perform at Mr. Blakes. Tomorrow They reap with machins at McFarlin place.” The reapers were to go

⁴⁹⁶ Willard Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 72-73; R. Douglas Hurt, *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994), 129-130.

⁴⁹⁷ Charles Post, “The “Agricultural Revolution” in the United States: The Development of Capitalism and the Adoption of the Reaper in the Antebellum U. S. North” *Science & Society* 61 (1997): 226.

to Fletcher's fields the day after McFarlin's land was cleared.⁴⁹⁸ The Marion County Agricultural Society reports also reflect this. The report from the 1854 meeting detailed that "Farm implements are more called for, and the buffing, rusty, rough mould-board is giving way to the best polished cast steel...and enabling [the farmer] to do his work not only better but more of it."⁴⁹⁹ By the middle of the 1850s, mechanical implements were in demand in central Indiana—as they were across the Early West—to improve the work and increase the amount of work possible.⁵⁰⁰

Fletcher's diary does give one small hint at the kind of rural anxiety over higher input costs of farming. In the 1854 entry where he describes the path of reapers through the community, he briefly states that "[Calvin, Jr.] is very cool does not fret as I should if I were to be responsible for a correct decision."⁵⁰¹ The increased responsibility of operating high value machinery in the setting of increased necessity of high volume agricultural output was not attractive to Fletcher—and probably other Hoosiers who preferred to maintain traditional farming methods. The tension of increased investments in seed, labor, technology, and planning all emerged during the 1850s as Hoosiers began responding to market forces that opened some avenues for family security like increased ability to invest in local manufacturing and agriculture and closed others like the small-scale subsistence farming that existed before land values increased in the post-railroad era.

⁴⁹⁸ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 244.

⁴⁹⁹ Fourth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture (Indianapolis: William J. Brown, 1856), 112. The report was published in 1856 and discussed the 1854 meeting.

⁵⁰⁰ Willard Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 67-69.

⁵⁰¹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 244.

The railroad played a role in shaping the labor market for farmers. The arrival of the railroad set off a boom in urban development and builders needed laborers to construct the city. The construction jobs in the city drew workers away from rural pursuits and drove wages up. During the 1840s in Marion County, increased investments in manufacturing establishments from \$141,874 to \$320,410 in 1850, and to \$785,865 invested in manufacturing by 1860. In 1850, manufacturing establishments produced \$892,133 and by 1860, those numbers increased to, \$1,111,370 value of produced goods.⁵⁰² Calvin Fletcher noted “so scarce are hands in consequence of the demand on R.R. that they can scarily [sic] be had—have to give from 1\$ [to] 1 50 per day for harvest hands.”⁵⁰³ In 1853, lazy laborers threatened Fletcher’s harvest by claiming they were too sick to work. He noted that “this warm morn 3 of our hands Mr. Anderson Mr. Andy Bolen & Noah Ford sick & c.”⁵⁰⁴ The next day, Fletcher stated that “Hands several failed to come to Harvest.”⁵⁰⁵ Several days later, he joined his son Calvin, Jr. in the field and “did a fine days work—cut some 10 or 12 acres—tho’ many of our hands had left us.”⁵⁰⁶

The high price for labor continued for the next few years. Fletcher, on April 1, 1856, stated that “I have concluded to hire Mr. Smith. He asks a dollar a day the year round. It is high but I think likely it is best. It seems the last 2 years have been quite

⁵⁰² *Sixth US Census; Seventh US Census; Eighth US Census.*

⁵⁰³ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 4* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1975), 299.

⁵⁰⁴ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 85.

⁵⁰⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 86.

⁵⁰⁶ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 89. The hired hands were in the fields earlier in the day and left after Calvin, Sr. arrived.

expensive.”⁵⁰⁷ The rising value of land, which drove higher property tax rates, along with the high costs of labor forced Hoosier farmers to expand their mechanical investments to maximize their opportunities to capitalize on the high prices given for crops. Hoosiers, who were increasingly looking to increase their family security by participating in the national economy, were forced to adapt new technology to make up for this output.⁵⁰⁸

The valuable farm land and large number of farms in the region made the city a hub of agricultural commerce and businesses sprang up to capitalize on those characteristics. One historian notes that after the railroads arrived “manufacturers appeared, and would not disappear. “Stores” that had formerly mixed up dry goods, groceries, grain, hardware, earthenware, and even books, in their stock, began to select and confine themselves to one or two classes of their former assortment.”⁵⁰⁹ City directories give us an insight into the kind of machinery produced and used in Marion County. The first city directory wasn’t published until 1855, suggesting that the city was small enough that residents were confident in their knowledge of city merchants and residents until the surge in population that followed the railroad. However, the advertisements in the *Indianapolis Directory* show that by the mid-1850s, rural residents could purchase a wide range of agricultural implements, some of them made locally. The M’ouat brothers operated a stove and coal shop that advertised plows and cultivators in

⁵⁰⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 5* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 510.

⁵⁰⁸ The discussion of how families adapted their economic security strategies to the rise of a market society can be seen in Daniel Vickers, “Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America,” in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 47 (1990), 3-29.

⁵⁰⁹ William Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870), 83.

their shop on East Washington Street. Their work was “done to order with neatness and Despatch.”⁵¹⁰ According to Indianapolis historian Edward Leary, “the Eagle Machine Works manufactured the new threshers and separators [was] fast becoming one of the state’s largest industries.”⁵¹¹ The other implement dealers in the area included Beard and Sinex, Birkenmayer and Brewster, and William H. Gause but they were wholesalers in the region.⁵¹² The Fourth Annual Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, from 1854, also suggested the recent emergence of manufacturing centers in the city. It notes that, “several enterprising mechanical establishments have been located in this county during the past year, at which implements of husbandry are made of which the manufacturer may justly be proud.”⁵¹³

Indianapolis’ emergence as a central hub was not limited to manufacturing. Leary notes that other industries also developed their own economic sphere of influence. He states that grocers, druggists, iron and tin production centers and others all centered in the city and “made daily shipments by rail to all parts of the state.”⁵¹⁴ Other industries included musical merchandise, gun making, tailoring, furniture making, and various hardware goods.⁵¹⁵ Moreover, general stores evolved and began specializing in goods. Whereas merchants like Nicholas McCarty dealt in all types of goods in the 1820s, by

⁵¹⁰ A. C. Grooms and W. T. Smith, *Indianapolis Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror* (Indianapolis: A.C. Grooms and W. T. Smith, 1855), 84.

⁵¹¹ Edward Leary, *Indianapolis: The Story of a City* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970), 69.

⁵¹² A. C. Grooms and W. T. Smith, *Indianapolis Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror* (Indianapolis: A.C. Grooms and W. T. Smith, 1855), 90.

⁵¹³ Fourth Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture (Indianapolis: William J. Brown, 1856), 112.

⁵¹⁴ Edward Leary, *Indianapolis: The Story of a City* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970), 69.

⁵¹⁵ A. C. Grooms and W. T. Smith, *Indianapolis Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror* (Indianapolis: A.C. Grooms and W. T. Smith, 1855), 38, 115, 131, 141; *Indianapolis City Directory for 1858-59*, (Indianapolis: R.L. Polk and Co., 1858), 11, 26.

1855, shops like Drum & Hill advertised the sale of “groceries, nails, glass, fish, salt” and a few specific other goods. Samuel Beck, a rifle manufacturer “Keeps always on hand a full assortment of everything pertaining to the gun business.”⁵¹⁶ Merchants no longer dealt in “all” goods; they increasingly specialized in certain industries. These advertisements, however limited, show that the city was growing beyond an economic outpost. Marion County, after the emergence of the railroad, entered the third stage of development noted by Timothy Mahoney as it established itself as an economic hub.

While the region became more economically powerful, social issues continued to emerge as class striations developed during the late 1840s and 1850s. The arrival of the railroad allowed for exportation of agricultural products, especially pork. In 1847, Benjamin I. Blythe and Edwin Hedderly began a slaughter and packing house that employed fifty laborers to process the five hundred to six hundred hogs that came through per day. These laborers were a new fixture to Indianapolis, a city that had previously had cheap farm land even within the city limits. For the first time, although Calvin Fletcher never expounded on it, a labor union marched on the city in 1850 in favor of “increased wages, improved educational opportunities, better understanding between employer and employee” and a basic level of health insurance in periods of “pecuniary distress during sickness of its members.”⁵¹⁷ These residents, focused on providing a competency for their family, for the first time found themselves in the position that workers in New York City had experienced for nearly three decades.⁵¹⁸ The

⁵¹⁶ A. C. Grooms and W. T. Smith, *Indianapolis Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror* (Indianapolis: A.C. Grooms and W. T. Smith, 1855), 110, 114.

⁵¹⁷ Edward Leary, *Indianapolis: The Story of a City* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970), 70.

⁵¹⁸ Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). See especially chapters 4-7.

transportation revolution, finally by the mid-1850s, created the same labor problems in a western land-locked city as it did in the largest city in the United States.

William Gallagher, in his 1858 address to the Marion County Agricultural Society argued that Hoosiers needed to recognize the “floating fact” that agriculture was changing.⁵¹⁹ The speech ultimately argued that the mechanical revolution emerging in agricultural markets was good for farmers. He stated that rural folks should invest in their operations and that “all that is necessary is *determination*.”⁵²⁰ His advice urged farmers to heed the agricultural press and that farmers should stop accumulating large tracts of land. Instead, Gallagher argued, farmers should fertilize their fields, plow deeply, and use machinery to save labor.⁵²¹ Moreover, Gallagher hinted that improved agriculture would allow farmers to increase the economic output of their investment. He stated that “why buy and own and pay taxes and keep up fences on two acres, when one acre, if property treated, will yield all that you usually get from the two?”⁵²² He noted that the increased costs were not too heavy and that improvements’ “expense not eat up the product.”⁵²³

Gallagher urged farmers to take up new methods because he felt that Hoosiers made no improvements at all. He stated that “I fail to find satisfactory evidences that

⁵¹⁹ “Floating fact” was Gallagher’s phrase to describe the simple truths emerging out of scientific agriculture. See *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, Containing the Transactions of the Board, and Reports of the County Societies, for the Years 1858-’59* (Indianapolis: John C. Walker, 1860), 192-196.

⁵²⁰ *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, Containing the Transactions of the Board, and Reports of the County Societies, for the Years 1858-’59* (Indianapolis: John C. Walker, 1860), 186.

⁵²¹ *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, Containing the Transactions of the Board, and Reports of the County Societies, for the Years 1858-’59* (Indianapolis: John C. Walker, 1860), 198.

⁵²² *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, Containing the Transactions of the Board, and Reports of the County Societies, for the Years 1858-’59* (Indianapolis: John C. Walker, 1860), 186.

⁵²³ *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, Containing the Transactions of the Board, and Reports of the County Societies, for the Years 1858-’59* (Indianapolis: John C. Walker, 1860), 187.

your acreable yield of wheat is increasing. And on your rich bottom...you do not grow more corn per acre now than was grown when I was a boy.”⁵²⁴ However, Gallagher’s claims seem to be more rhetorical than accurate. The agricultural census shows a drastic increase in production. As noted above, crop production increased dramatically in Marion County during the 1850s and this includes Calvin Fletcher’s notation in July of 1859 stating that “the Wheat is mostly cut but a poor crop.”⁵²⁵ It seems that Gallagher’s comments, while suggesting that Hoosiers should continue to improve their farms, was much more rhetorical than descriptive in his address to the society.

Gallagher’s own speech belies the changes in agricultural practices that occurred with lightning speed in the 1850s. He noted that Hoosiers recognized a feeling of loss of old farming methods by the end of the decade. He, in his 1858 address to the Marion County Agricultural Society, described his feeling regarding the increasing mechanization of farming and quoted a Wordsworth poem, “But yet I know, where e’re I go, That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.”⁵²⁶ He suggested that the feeling of loss associated with mechanization “is an amiable one. Many of you [in attendance] I doubt not, have felt it in your better moments.”⁵²⁷ His choice of poem was a rhetorical strategy that acknowledged the feelings of agriculturalists who were hesitant about undertaking the new agricultural methods, drew them into his frame of mind, and allowed

⁵²⁴ *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, Containing the Transactions of the Board, and Reports of the County Societies, for the Years 1858-'59* (Indianapolis: John C. Walker, 1860), 194.

⁵²⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 240.

⁵²⁶ *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, Containing the Transactions of the Board, and Reports of the County Societies, for the Years 1858-'59* (Indianapolis: John C. Walker, 1860), 186.

⁵²⁷ *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, Containing the Transactions of the Board, and Reports of the County Societies, for the Years 1858-'59* (Indianapolis: John C. Walker, 1860), 186.

the speaker to make his ultimate argument in favor for improvement that he felt was so important.

The newspaper reports of the state fairs were much more forgiving of Indiana agriculture. The *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel* report on October 25, 1855 noted that “it is well understood...that the collection of stock, implements, and various products and manufactures, is larger than has been presented on any previous occasion; the means of comparison and experiment are more satisfactory, and the [a]pportunities for the mutual improvement of separate districts thereby vastly extended.”⁵²⁸ The report also noted the presence of various improved stock breeds including Durhams, Berkshire, Merinos, and others suggesting a wide variety of agricultural improvements in livestock. The article, far from admonishing residents of their lack of improvement, proclaimed that “Indiana is coming to assume her proper rank in the constellation of sisters, and from poverty and seclusion, her people are rising into wealth...Her agriculture is the main support of her strength, and in this mighty awakening it requires no seer’s prophetic vision.”⁵²⁹

Newspaper reports regarding the state fair of 1856 also noted the first contest of machinery. The grinding contest, won by local resident J.O. Joyce and his “Star Mill...was preferred above all others for the fineness of grinding, the economy of its draft, general simplicity and strength of construction. It was a glorious victory.”⁵³⁰ The other reported event was a corn crushing contest between several mills in the city where controversy ensued. The “Little Giant,” the “Star Mill,” and four others—as listed in the results—engaged in a contest over who could produce the most corn using standardized

⁵²⁸ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel*, October 25, 1855.

⁵²⁹ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel*, October 25, 1855.

⁵³⁰ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel*, Oct. 30, 1856.

equipment. The Star Mill was declared the winner in the contest by producing the most corn. The owner of the Little Giant, however, noted that they used less power to produce their corn and, when considering this fact, they argued they were the winner.⁵³¹ That the first contest occurred during the 1850s shows that Hoosiers were finally interested in agricultural improvements during the era. Marion County farmers watched the contest for entertainment, but also learned that increased yields were manageable to local mills while agriculturalists were telling them that they should improve their inputs. Overall, this suggests that the 1850s were the major turning point regarding improved agriculture as transportation and manufacturing allowed farmers to increase their harvest and efficiently get them to customers.

The new economy faced its first test during the Panic of 1857. The Panic emerged in August of 1857 after the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company's failure to pay loans shook the national economy and credit dried up as it had two decades earlier. The failure of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company left an indelible mark on the stock market. For the next three weeks, stocks fell across sectors and New York banks hoarded specie to protect themselves against demand deposit withdrawals. In addition, they called in notes from western and southern banks to meet any potential runs on the bank. More bad news emerged when the *Central America*, a ship loaded with one and a half million dollars of gold specie, sank off the coast of South America. The ensuing dread caused the Secretary of the Treasury Howell Cobb to inject specie into the New York banking system but it was not enough to stem the rush of people looking to reclaim their deposits. The end of September witnessed Philadelphia's Bank of Pennsylvania

⁵³¹ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel*, Oct. 30, 1856.

suspending specie payments, furthering the belief that the shaky banking system would crumble under its own weight. Confident commenters noted that the bank runs would stop when farmers sold their exceptionally large crops in the fall. The end of the Crimean War earlier that year, however, lowered prices and kept farmers from selling their crops and allowing western merchants to repay their loans to eastern creditors. The ensuing panic lasted until 1860 when European harvests failed and caused an uptick in prices. Regionally, the effects of the Panic of 1857 wore off during the Civil War as demand for agricultural goods surged, especially after 1863.⁵³²

Indiana banks experienced the Panic of 1857 slightly differently than the rest of the nation. The Indiana Constitution of 1851 created new banking laws that inadvertently safeguarded the state system from the Panic of 1857. The success of these safeguards prevented the mass sales of land that Hoosiers experienced during the Panic of 1837. Indeed, newspapers are relatively silent on subject of land sales compared to the crisis two decades prior.⁵³³ The free banking act of 1852 led to an explosion of paper money in the state as banks emerged to embrace the rapidly expanding economy of the state. By 1855, ninety one banks opened across the state with five in Indianapolis. These banks were required to have twelve percent reserve specie of a minimum of \$50,000 in capital, but the low reserve rate allowed unscrupulous investors to acquire bank charters and fleece the public. Wildcat bankers obtained charters, bought land with bank deposits, and fled knowing their depositors could not find them. In less than three years, fifty-one free

⁵³² James Huston, *The Panic of 1857 and the Coming of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 14-34, 213; Howard Houk, *A Century of Indiana Farm Prices, 1841 to 1941* (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Agricultural Experiment Station, 1943), 42-65.

⁵³³ There are a few examples of people leaving businesses in during the Panic. See *Daily State Sentinel*, November 7, 1857; *Daily State Sentinel*, May 1, 1858; *Daily State Sentinel*, July 3, 1858.

banks failed. To remedy the issue, free bankers met in Indianapolis in early 1855 to classify banks but the classifications were not accurate.⁵³⁴ A small panic in 1855 cleared out most of the small banks and left the remaining institutions on solid footing.⁵³⁵

The Panic of 1857 didn't hit Marion County until October. Calvin Fletcher noted on the first of October that "the pecuniary distress of the Country seems to be extreme when I say of the Country I rather should say of the great & little money dealers & speculators of the land. The moderate mechanic & farmer is yet safe & well off."⁵³⁶ By October 14, however, Fletcher noted that "the indebtedness [sic] is from a few banks & brokers in our state. I think now a general suspension must ensue. I dread that the old...state bank will have to do so."⁵³⁷ Bank leaders met the next day to discuss their reactions to the crisis. Hugh McCulloch, remembered that "I had been tolerably hard worked before, but the real hard work of my life commenced with my election to the presidency of the Bank of the State of Indiana."⁵³⁸ He noted that the bank continued to distribute specie because "There was really no alternative. Specie payments must be maintained, or the charter [for the bank] would be forfeited."⁵³⁹ Calvin Fletcher, on behalf of the bank, went to New York to meet with Winslow, Lanier & Co. to discuss the

⁵³⁴ Edward Leary, *Indianapolis: The Story of a City*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971): 84-86.

⁵³⁵ James Huston, *The Panic of 1857 and the Coming of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 86; for a further analysis, see Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1965), 424-431. See also, Logan Esarey, *State Banking in Indiana, 1814-1873* (Bloomington: Indiana University Studies, 1912), 279-299.

⁵³⁶ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 114.

⁵³⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 118.

⁵³⁸ Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of a Half a Century* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1888), 130.

⁵³⁹ Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of a Half a Century* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1888), 134.

fiscal situation. Fletcher noted that “I sat down with Lanier & looked into a state of his affairs. I found them very good That a suspension was unnecessary.”⁵⁴⁰

The bank hemorrhaged specie in the following weeks but survived the panic without ever suspending specie payment. McCulloch stated that:

For three or four weeks the calls upon the branches were so continuous and heavy that it seemed probable that their entire circulation would be sent home.”⁵⁴¹ In the fifth week there was an improvement in the financial outlook...Calls upon the neighboring branches continued for a week or two longer, and then ceased altogether. The crisis had been passed—the charter was safe.⁵⁴²

Nonetheless, prices for goods were significantly lower after the panic. Calvin Fletcher noted that, by January of 1858, “things in a pecuniary way look some what gloomy...produce cost very high to make or raise [crops] as labor has been quite high up to August last.”⁵⁴³ The Panic of 1857 was difficult for local farmers as shown by the prices listed in Fletcher’s diary. He only received sixty cents/bushel for wheat and between fifteen and twenty cents/bushel for corn which was less than half of what he received in 1854. Cattle also dropped precipitously. In March of 1857, Fletcher sold cattle at \$4.75 each but by the end of the year he was only getting \$2.50.⁵⁴⁴ The collapse in prices was felt across the region as noted from an article reprinted from the *Cincinnati Gazette*, which stated that “prices [in Cincinnati] have for some time been above a

⁵⁴⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 123.

⁵⁴¹ Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of a Half a Century* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1888), 134.

⁵⁴² Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of a Half a Century* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1888), 135.

⁵⁴³ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 160.

⁵⁴⁴ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 41, 160.

shipping point, and it will require a material improvement on the Eastern seaboard to justify an advance in this market.”⁵⁴⁵

In Indiana, wages along the Ohio River were reduced. The *Daily State Sentinel* noted in a brief article that “The cotton mill company at Cannelton, Ind., determined a few days since to suspend all further work for the present, unless the operatives would consent to a reduction of 10 per cent. upon their wages. This announcement produced great excitement among the operatives, but they finally consented to the reduction.”⁵⁴⁶ In Indianapolis, wages were cut in half for agricultural workers. In January 1857, laborers between a dollar and a dollar and twenty-five cents a day but by January 1858, they were getting only fifty to sixty cents. By the end of 1858, workers were getting fifteen dollars a month as noted by Calvin Fletcher.⁵⁴⁷

By 1860, the economy of central Indiana recovered from the shock of 1857. Corn prices were up to “30 to 35 cts per bushell” and cattle prices were back up to the pre-panic rate of \$4.80.⁵⁴⁸ Fletcher even noted in his diary that “our money returns for redemption rapidly...quite an increase the last year. The business of the county seems healthy.”⁵⁴⁹ Labor prices also seemed to rebound. Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman show that average farm laborers got board plus \$13.71 in 1860 in Indiana, and the prices in central Indiana were generally higher than the rest of the state. The fifteen dollar per

⁵⁴⁵ *Daily State Sentinel*, June 4, 1858.

⁵⁴⁶ *Daily State Sentinel*, October 28, 1857.

⁵⁴⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 160, 267.

⁵⁴⁸ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 518, 617.

⁵⁴⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 617.

month wage mentioned in 1858 compared to the 1860 census reflects the resurgent economy of Marion County. Fletcher noted in his diary in late-1858 that he “paid him [Lucian Fletcher, his nephew] \$15 per month for 8 months 120\$ more than he deserved.”⁵⁵⁰ Taking Fletcher’s family loyalty into account suggests that by 1860 wages were higher than the state average and show that Marion County workers were benefitting from the economic uptick.

Ultimately, Hoosiers were pushed and pulled into increased market orientated production during the 1850s. The increasing lack of available land during the 1850s pushed Hoosiers to make a choice of either moving farther West to remain on the edge of the economic frontier or improving the land they already owned. As the state became more fully settled, Hoosiers made the economically-rational decision to increasingly turn toward land improvements as a way to take advantage of railroad transportation networks to increase their profits. The lack of available labor also pushed Hoosiers into market-oriented investments, as low numbers of available farm hands made mechanization the economically practical choice. The high costs of buying machinery were offset by high wages and the ability of a community to band together to purchase manufactured goods. Finally, they were pulled by high crop prices. Marion County residents routinely experienced higher crop prices, on average, than the rest of the state.⁵⁵¹ The availability of railroads directly in Marion County probably account for this as wholesalers could buy goods at higher prices due to lower shipping costs than from non-rail connected places.

⁵⁵⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 267.

⁵⁵¹ Howard Houk, *A Century of Indiana Farm Prices*. Lafayette (Lafayette: Purdue University Agricultural Extension Station, 1943).

As a result, these Hoosiers did not share the experience felt by Northeastern Americans who made a series of small choices that led to a slow transition toward capitalism. While Christopher Clark and Daniel Vickers posit that Americans in the Northeast took on outwork to supplement the family income, Marion County residents had little opportunity to do so because of their lack of a connection to outside markets. Instead, residents of Marion County had few choices about whether or not to get into market-oriented production. The push-pull factors noted above suggest that their connection to markets after the markets were already established gave them the opportunity to take part in a relatively mature economic system. The lack of laborers forced Hoosiers to abandon traditional farming methods and community-oriented production. Their existence on the frontier prevented the long-standing ties noted in many discussions of the transition to capitalism and the result of that dearth was the quick emergence of economically driven choices.

The speed of the transition toward increased market output during the 1850s is a strikingly unique feature of Marion County development. At the beginning of 1847, virtually no trade occurred on a regional or national basis. Hoosiers were secluded by the environment in such a fashion that national market orientation was nearly futile. By 1855, Hoosiers were able to participate in trade anywhere the increasingly large and efficient rail network reached. More so than most other Midwestern areas that were connected to navigable rivers, Marion County residents relied on the rise of the railroad to alter their economic strategies. By 1860, they were competing with other regional cities to be the commercial hub of the region. Rather than trying to enter the market, they were competing to obtain market share.

The experience of Marion County is much more similar to cities of the Far West than it was to Midwestern cities like Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, or even Chicago. The telescoped pattern of development shows that the railroad was far more significant for Marion County development than it was for any other city in the regions surveyed here. As Elliot West has noted, “in a frontier city, thoroughly modern arrangements...could emerge with a speed and an ease of innovation incomprehensible in more settled cities where older ways were firmly in place.”⁵⁵² The transportation and communication revolution allowed Indianapolis and Marion County to become “thoroughly modern” by the advent of the Civil War, after only thirteen years of railroad connection as the frontier period ended with astonishing speed.

⁵⁵² Elliot West, “Grain Kings, Rubber Dreams, and Stock Exchanges: How Transportation and Communication Changed Frontier Cities,” *Frontier Cities: Encounters at the Crossroads of Empire*, ed. by Jay Gitlin et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 112.

CHAPTER 8: “ECONOMIC INTEGRATION: CIVIL WAR, REGION, AND THE END OF TELESCOPED GROWTH DURING THE 1860S”

By 1860, Marion County’s economy mirrored those of other regionally and nationally oriented markets. The economic developments regarding wage labor, capital acquisition, and investments during the Civil War era were largely changes of degree rather than kind. The city continued to emerge as an economic hub. By 1862, nine railroads serviced the city and Hoosiers could travel in any direction. Land and crop prices show that the emergent economy of central Indiana was on par with the rest of the Early West in 1860. By the end of the war, and especially by 1870, Indianapolis and Marion County were fully entrenched into the national economy. The percentage of improved acreage, value of farms, and other measures of rural economic activity all stabilized in the region in relation to the larger economic network of the Early West.⁵⁵³ During the 1860s, the economy of Marion County grew to encompass an even larger hinterland as they served the surrounding region with dozens of steam mills, factories and wholesale shops. Hoosiers in Marion County, and all of central Indiana, acquired the national and international markets they sought for nearly a half century.⁵⁵⁴

Those benefits came with a cost, however, as the Civil War erupted and turned the nation into a crucible of war. Hoosiers—for the first time, and like the rest of the nation—experienced the full brunt of being connected to a national society. The Civil War solidified Indianapolis as a central hub of Northern commerce, while at the same

⁵⁵³ See below and Appendix Three.

⁵⁵⁴ *Sutherland and McEvoy’s Indianapolis City Directory and Business Mirror* (Indianapolis: Sutherland & McEvoy, 1860); *Indianapolis Directory, and Business Mirror, for 1861* (Indianapolis: Bowen, Stewart & Co., Publishers & Booksellers, 1861); *Dodd, Talbott & Parsons’ Indianapolis City Directory and Business Mirror for 1862* (Indianapolis: H.H. Dodd & Co., Book and Job Printers and Book Binders, 1862).

time subjugating its residents to the vagaries of a wide-reaching national government. Hoosiers felt the wide-spread reach of the federal government as the draft reached for local sons. At the same time, markets, which were already changing drastically, were limited by an embargo on the rebelling states. Significant numbers of agricultural producers lost once-stable relationships with southern merchants and had to find new ways to market their merchandise. Residents of Marion County also experienced the brunt of military necessity as thousands of soldiers thronged to Camp Morton for training. Quite unpopularly, Camp Morton housed a prisoner-of-war camp that nearly led to a Confederate raid and local uprising.

The city matured economically faster than any water based city in the Midwestern commercial network other than Chicago. The following charts based on the agricultural census show that, by 1870, central Indiana was the economic center of the state and that Marion County was on par with other major midwestern cities. Farm values per acre show Marion County far ahead of any other county examined in the state, while those same farm values were in the middle of the values of other counties across the United States. The value of farms per improved acre show comparable results. Overall, it is clear that by the 1870 census, Indianapolis acquired its place in the Midwestern trade network and established itself as the agricultural hub of the state.

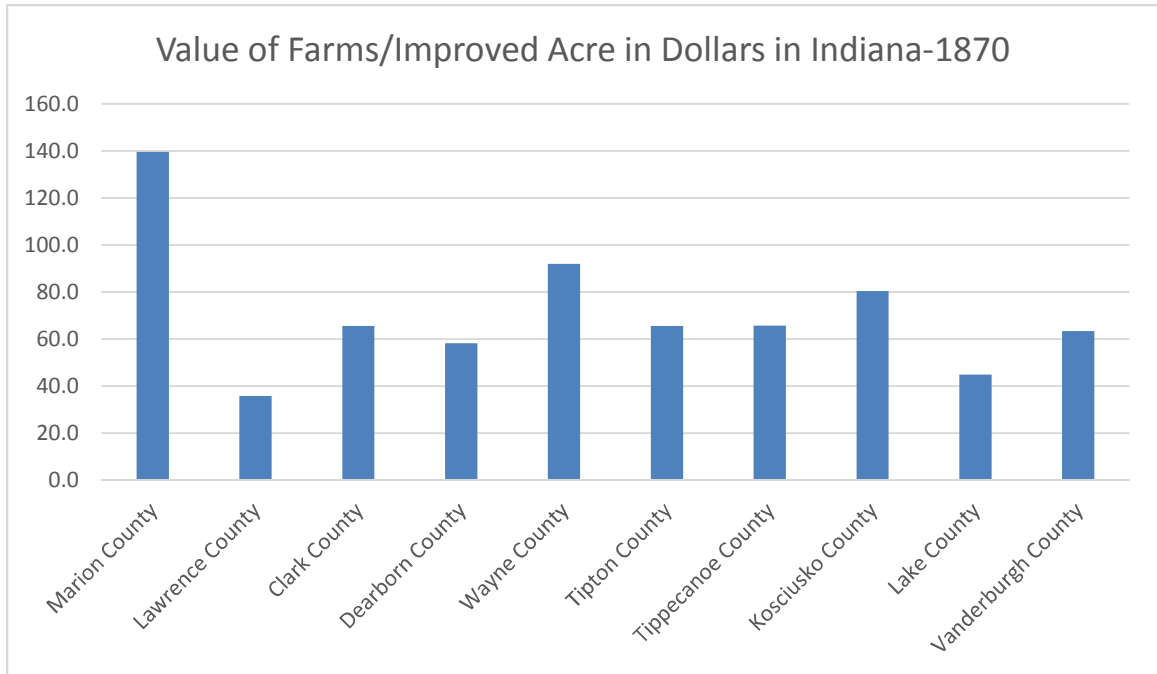


Figure 8: Value of Farms/Acre in Dollars in Indiana-1870

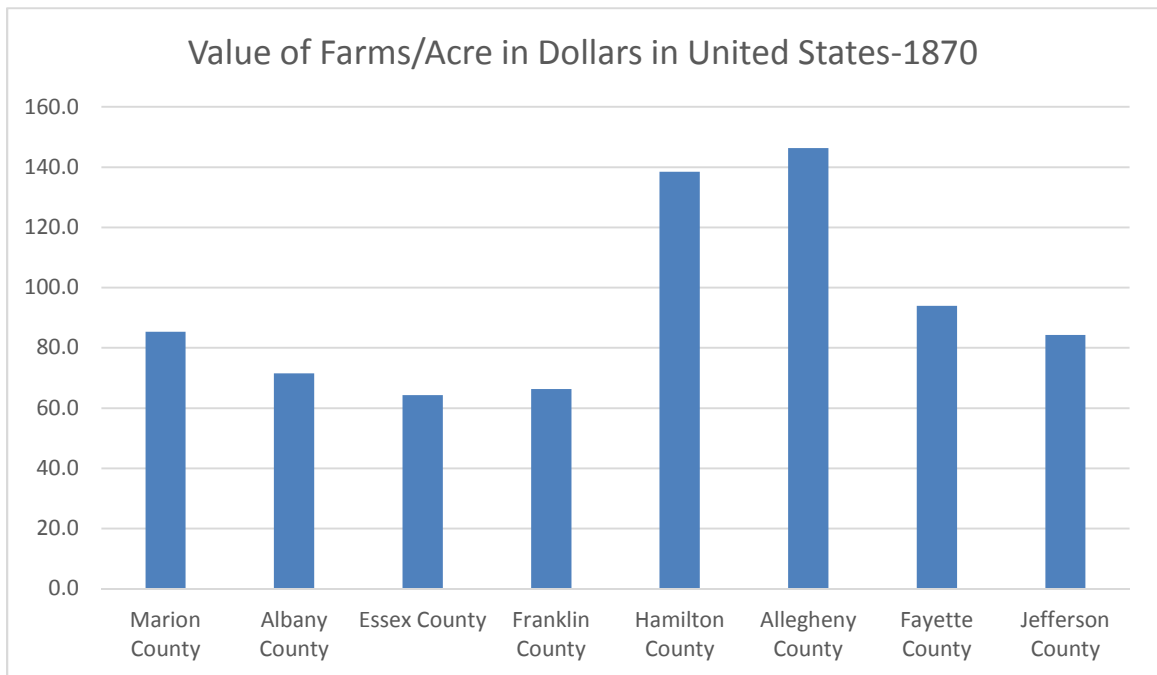


Figure 9: Value of Farms/Acre in Dollars in United States-1870

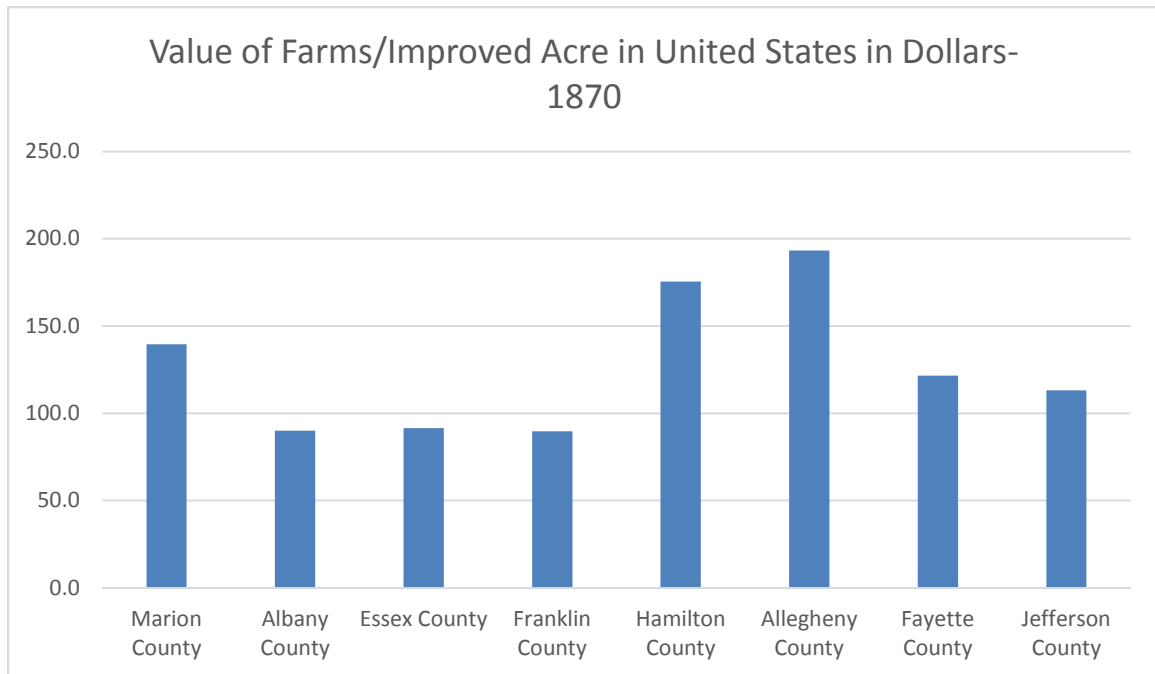


Figure 10: Value of Farms/Improved Acre in United States in Dollars-1870

The agricultural sector shows the telescoped growth of central Indiana. The early adoption of railroad transportation allowed Marion County to easily outpace growth in other midwestern cities. This argument is bolstered by the rate of increase in the manufacturing sector. By any measure, Hoosier manufacturing skyrocketed. By 1870, investments in Marion County factories increased to \$8,303,185. The value of manufactured goods increased to \$16,642,106. Both numbers reflect an increase rate of over one thousand percent which far outpaced the growth in Cincinnati.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁵ *Ninth US Census*. Hamilton County, Ohio manufacturing far outpaced that of Marion County, Indiana in 1870. The Hoosier capital never exceeded Porkopolis in manufacturing during the nineteenth century, arguably, because it was cheaper to produce goods where the infrastructure already existed and ship the goods via railroad to their destination. Thus, while central Indiana saw explosive growth in the manufacturing center, it could not disrupt the established manufacturing infrastructure of the nation much in the same fashion that cities of the Far West could not establish themselves as major manufacturing centers.

Residents of Marion County experienced further negative traits of cheap rail travel as the railroad emerged as the dominant mode of transportation. Most significantly, the central location of Indianapolis in the rail hubs of the Early West—away from the Ohio River border of Kentucky, on rail connections between East and West, and closer to the site of the front than Chicago—brought huge numbers of troops to the city, and Governor Oliver Morton pledged vigorous support to the Union.⁵⁵⁶ Moreover, Morton created a prisoner of war camp and troop training ground. Residents had mixed reactions to these developments as some saw the sacrifices as a patriotic duty while others wished to remain secluded from national affairs.⁵⁵⁷ All Hoosiers, however, were terrified when the city became a target of Confederate aggression and runaway slaves settled in the city in large numbers.⁵⁵⁸ Central Indiana's connection to the larger economic world brought wider prosperity to many of its residents, but it also made the city a center of military and economic matters that encroached on the goals of economic independence many residents sought when they moved to the region. In the end, they sacrificed their personal liberty for economic security.

Hoosiers knew that secession was a possibility, but most Hoosiers in central Indiana did not believe that disunion would ever occur. Before the war, as recounted by Emma Lou Thornbrough, the Indianapolis *Daily Journal* noted that “one single year of Lincoln's administration...would expose the hollowness of the secession threat so

⁵⁵⁶ John Barnhart, “The Impact of the Civil War on Indiana,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 57 (1961): 191-192.

⁵⁵⁷ David Bodenhamer, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 381-382

⁵⁵⁸ David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 101; Margrette Boyer, “Morgan's Raid in Indiana,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, 8 (1912): 149-165.

effectually “that it will never be heard from again.”⁵⁵⁹ Calvin Fletcher noted on October 29th that “in the eve read that threats of the Southern states S.C. Alabama Miss & La. to secede if Lincon is elected. I can’t think it possible that such an even can occur. The Slave States would be [in] the most miserable condition to do any such thing. And a voice seems to begin in these very states against it. Their real & personal estate & credit would sadly depreciate at once in such an event.”⁵⁶⁰ A letter from Elijah Fletcher to his father in mid-November stated that “we live right on the crack [at New Albany on the Ohio River] where this glorious confederacy will break. Sometimes it appears to yawn; but I cannot think ‘Mr. Palmetto’ so demented as to cut his own throat. *Korn Kracker* wants to be loyal; and unless forced, will never throw himself behind a *cotton* bale to fight.” However, the letter ominously continued regarding the economic tensions along the Ohio River, noting that “New Albany is greatly dependent on the south for steamboat building. Several hundred thousands having been expended thus during the present year...They threatred to remove their patronage. Paducah Ky. has instituted a rival boat yard; and appeals loudly to all loyal Southrans [sic] to come to the rescue.”⁵⁶¹

South Carolina’s secession stunned Hoosiers. They were shocked when South Carolina seceded from the Union in December of 1860 and intensified the crisis over the course of the next month for Marion County residents. During the secession process, Hoosiers suggested that the North did everything reasonable to maintain the Union. On

⁵⁵⁹ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1995): 96.

⁵⁶⁰ Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher in Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 620.

⁵⁶¹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 633.

December 18, Calvin Fletcher noted that “secession of S. Carolina I think is a fixed fact...The north seem to be willing to make all needed concessions.”⁵⁶² He noted in his diary on two days later that “nothing new except the secession of South Carolina...Its consequence I cant tell. The better judgment at present is not to fight them. They seem to court a fight & unless they can consecrate the act by shedding of blood & get up a military fever they will soon die out.”⁵⁶³ The *Indiana State Guard*—a paper known for its support of slavery—on December 22, 1860, noted that “the deed is done!...There is now, unfortunately for the country, no Washington or Jackson to say to the turbulent factions of either in the North or the South *be still*.”⁵⁶⁴ While still not surprised at southern secessionists, less than two weeks later, after a run on the banks and the increased probability that more states would follow the Palmetto States out of the Union, Fletcher lamented that “It has been 35 days of great anguish & fear. South Carolina Succeeded & other states will likely follow in their footsteps...I pray that our union may be preserved.”⁵⁶⁵

The anxiety over the fate of the Union continued during the winter of 1861. Newspapers battered their opponents with accusations of fault and called for various solutions from armed force to avoidance.⁵⁶⁶ Those feelings dissipated in April of 1861 with the attack on Fort Sumter. Newspapers emerged fully on the side of Union victory.

⁵⁶² Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 653.

⁵⁶³ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 653.

⁵⁶⁴ *Indiana State Guard*, December 22, 1860.

⁵⁶⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 6* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 659.

⁵⁶⁶ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1995), 96-101.

Even the *Indiana State Sentinel*, a paper highly unsupportive of Lincoln, argued that “the door for reconciliation, compromise or a peaceful separation, was closed against [the South].”⁵⁶⁷ In the long run, the attack on Fort Sumter pushed Indiana into the Union camp. While some Hoosiers maintained their political leanings with the Democratic party as noted by the large Copperhead presence in the state during the war, the vast majority felt that the time for compromise was over and that the South was to blame for the war.

Rural people struggled with the war effort as their markets were cut off. Emma Lou Thornbrough noted that “disruption of trade with the South worked an especial hardship upon certain groups [including] farmers who had sold the bulk of their crops to the southern market.”⁵⁶⁸ The *Indiana State Sentinel*, on May 15, 1861, discussed the closure of the market routes at Cairo, IL. It stated that the question of whether to close markets was undertaken in the House the preceding day “in connection with a proposition for the enactment of some law for their relief of debtors.” The article noted that “it was argued by the friends of the proposition, that it was unfair to deprive the farmer, the manufacturer and the mechanic of the markets which they have relied upon for the sale of the products of their labor and yet permit the laws for the enforcement of the collection of debts to remain in full force against them. If deprived of a market their resources are cut off and they are unable to meet their obligations...The stoppage of supplies will operate with peculiar hardship upon the citizens of southern Indiana, and those of the middle part of the State will also feel its effects.”⁵⁶⁹ Hoosier farmers were affected by the blockade

⁵⁶⁷ *Indiana State Sentinel*, April 17, 1861.

⁵⁶⁸ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1995), 192.

⁵⁶⁹ *Indiana State Sentinel*, May 15, 1861.

much in the same as border residents. Douglas Hurt has noted that “by late November 1862, tobacco had become one of the staple products of Indiana...farmers in southern Indiana reportedly showed “unusual excitement” as they planned to seed a larger tobacco crop in the spring.”⁵⁷⁰

The transition to the tobacco economy was an excellent way for Hoosiers to make up for lost markets. Corn, as a remnant of the early economy, was still a major crop on the eve of the Civil War and one dominant market was still oriented southward.⁵⁷¹ Market listings in newspapers show that the predominant trade was oriented toward two cities at the outset of the war: New York and Cincinnati. Cities like Louisville, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, or Chicago were not listed in the local papers, showing that the Hoosier economy evolved toward the South and East.⁵⁷² However, the onset of the Civil War brought a severe disruption in markets for Indiana farmers and a recalibration toward predominantly eastern markets. Marion County saw a decrease of 15.5% in corn production and an increase of 85.1% in wheat production during the 1860s seemingly as a result of the embargo. The elimination of corn markets during the war drove trade away from the South and to the North. The economic benefits of transitioning to wheat production—which was already underway during the 1850s—intensified the market

⁵⁷⁰ R. Douglas Hurt, *Food and Agriculture During the Civil War* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2016), 46. Southern counties including Spencer and Pike grew over a million pounds of tobacco in 1870. A massive increase of at least 40% in each state. from the 1860 numbers. See *Eighth US Census; Ninth US Census*.

⁵⁷¹ Paul Salstrom, *From Pioneering to Persevering: Family Farming in Indiana to 1880* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007), 100.

⁵⁷² *Daily State Sentinel*, 11 May 1861.

connections with northern commercial centers because of the trade embargo with the south.⁵⁷³

Grain prices in 1859 were unmatched up to that point in the state's history. 1860 saw a regression back to more normal—yet still above average prices—but the first years of the Civil War saw severe declines in grain prices received by Indiana farmers.⁵⁷⁴ In July of 1861, Calvin Fletcher noted that crop prices for corn were “not over 20 cents & in the county away from R.R. it is not exceeding 10 to 15.”⁵⁷⁵ Not until the third year of the war did Hoosier prices for grain recover to levels reached before the war began. This lag time suggests that the embargo of trade between North and South was working and that Hoosiers were recalibrating their trade patterns away from the traditional southern markets noted in earlier chapters, and toward Northern markets that provided farmers an outlet for their increasingly bountiful harvests. Yet, the struggle at the local level remained as Hoosiers were forced to adopt new crops like tobacco or struggle with the lower income of the corn-hog economy during the early years of the war.

The Civil War also caused tension over migration into the region. Even though the Civil War created a need for agricultural labor, Marion County advertisements show that local Hoosiers only welcomed certain social groups to the area. One discriminatory advertisement for labor published in the *Indiana State Guard* in 1861 noted that Marion County resident J.S. Brown wished “to employ two active hands to cut saw-logs; also one to drive oxen...For the farm hand, an Englishman or German preferred; the others to be

⁵⁷³ *Seventh US Census; Eighth US Census; Ninth US Census.*

⁵⁷⁴ Howard J. Houk, *A Century of Indiana Farm Prices, 1841-1941* (Lafayette: Purdue University Agricultural Experiment Station, 1943), 50.

⁵⁷⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 7* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1980), 157.

Americans.”⁵⁷⁶ That the article specified what ethnicity should apply for the job belies the wide-ranging racism present in Marion County. It is even more important because this type of advertisement was absent from earlier issues before the railroad connected the city to the rest of the nation. Only after an influx of outsiders made Hoosiers uncomfortable with some residents of the region, did articles specifying the ethnic makeup of potential employees emerge.

Even more tension surrounded increased black migration to central Indiana. Though the Constitution of 1851 banned black migration into the state, thousands of African Americans found their way into Indiana as the war carried into its second year. Calvin Fletcher noted where these escaped slaves were coming from when he noted that he got a shirt “for a colored boy 18 who was brot with the Southern army to Ky. & has ran away & I am usually called on to aid them on to a safer region.”⁵⁷⁷ Similar to the 1840s, when Germans and Irish people surged into the region following the railroad, African Americans flooded into Marion County following opportunities to escape to the North.

The number of escaped slaves became a contested issue in the region because it challenged the free labor ideology that most Hoosiers supported. Erik Wade argues that “The “multifaceted nature” of free-soil ideology rested on the basis of free white labor, which was antithetical to slavery and, in Indiana, at least, opposed competition from free black labor.”⁵⁷⁸ Marion County largely supported this trend. An article in the *Indiana*

⁵⁷⁶ *Indiana State Guard*, January 12, 1861.

⁵⁷⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 7* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1980), 351.

⁵⁷⁸ Erik Wade, “Constituting Whiteness: The National Horse Thief Detective Association and Racial Mores in Indiana, 1850-1930” (Ph.D. Diss., Purdue University, 2011), 57.

Daily Sentinel, entitled “Cheap Labor” argued that “the thousands and tens of thousands of negroes that are coming into this State, unprovided for as they are with any means of making a living except by the hardest and roughest labor, is having the effect of reducing the price of labor.” The article continued “We already hear the farmers engaging these runaways at labor at greatly reduced prices, and this will continue and increase, until our white fellow-citizens, who labor for the support of themselves and their families, are compelled to compete with the labor of negroes, ...This is one of the effects of this war the laboring class will soon feel, by having the price of labor reduced to that of a runaway or emancipated negroe.”⁵⁷⁹ The article shows the anxiety of local Hoosiers regarding an economic competency for their families under the new form of wage labor emergent in central Indiana during the 1850s.

The article is also interesting because implies the increase of a rural/urban split that existed for the first time in Marion County. The article’s tone is one of warning to urban folks, rather than complaint when it notes that “We already hear the farmers engaging these runaways at labor.”⁵⁸⁰ African American settlement to the region was less problematic for rural residents than for their urban counterparts. Central Indiana Hoosiers, by 1860, were experiencing a widespread urbanization driven by Civil War demand. Soldiers needed food, clothes, and housing which the city provided, at exceptional profit. Rural residents, until 1863, struggled with low crop prices and labor losses. The issue of African Americans coming to the region solved the labor problem

⁵⁷⁹ *Daily State Sentinel*, April 29, 1862.

⁵⁸⁰ *Daily State Sentinel*, April 29, 1862. In 1863, Calvin Fletcher noted that he “had 4 negros that came from Louisville to enlist & worked & another negro who has been a resident of the state for a long time.” Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 7* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1980), 171.

caused by the Civil War, and the low wages offered to blacks allowed Hoosiers to make up for low crop prices during the initial years of the war. Rural farmers were already hiring African Americans because it allowed poorer farmers to avoid paying for expensive machinery during the early war years. The large number of African Americans who emerged at the same time that many white males left to fight provided rural Hoosiers the opportunity to limit labor costs and still use their preferred agricultural practices.⁵⁸¹ As the article suggests, urban residents had a different view of African Americans coming into the region. The booming economy of Indianapolis needed fewer laborers than its rural counterpart, as most of the jobs were oriented toward clerking, entertainment or washing. When African Americans entered the rural economy, urban residents witnessed the emergence of an existential threat to white dominance in the labor system.

A related urban/rural divide festered over the location of the Indiana State Fair. The majority of the fairs were held in Indianapolis at the State Fair Grounds north of the Circle before the war. As Camp Morton took over that plot during the belligerent years, other cities occasionally received the opportunity to host the event. In 1865, the fair was held in Madison, in 1867 it was held in Fort Wayne, and in 1868 it returned to its permanent home. Not all Hoosiers were thrilled having the State Fair in Indianapolis.⁵⁸² So much so that the 1869 report from the Marion County Board of Agriculture stated that “there is no disguising the fact that there exists, over almost the entire State, a petty jealousy, a pretended dislike of the capital and her institutions...Indianapolis is the

⁵⁸¹ Paul Salstrom, *From Pioneering to Persevering: Family Farming in Indiana to 1880* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007), 103-106.

⁵⁸² Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era: 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1995), 395.

property, as a capital, of the whole State, and every Indianaian should feel a just pride in her advancement. Build her up and leave the pulling down business to more unworthy hands.”⁵⁸³ This report shows the success of Marion County but also shows that Hoosiers were not entirely comfortable creating an urban sphere that was so much more dominant than the rest of the state. The resentment hinted at in the 1869 report shows another aftereffect of the transportation revolution, as Marion County Hoosiers were viewed as competitors for agricultural events rather than a source of pride to some Indiana residents.

The onset of the war also provided the city with tensions of its own. Governor Oliver Morton, a staunch Union supporter, volunteered Indianapolis as a new training ground and a prisoner of war camp. The creation of Camp Morton, the influx of soldiers, support staff and prisoners create an added layer of tension to a city experiencing massive growth during a period of national strife. Soldiers, rarely known to be polite guests, ran roughshod over the city. Calvin Fletcher noted that, “Soldiers continued to be a problem through the end of the war. In July 1865, Fletcher noted that “found several of Hancock’s [corps]...were strolling around the woods...& some prostitutes. These men of the worst character old hardened villians in crime stroled over the farm for few days past & are going from Camp Burnside to do much mischief.”⁵⁸⁴ During a swell in local military force in July of 1863, soldiers enjoyed their special brand of fun in various ways. George Julian, a volunteer from Wayne County, remembered that “the boys were not neglectful of the amenities of life” and that a favorite pastime was to fill preacher’s canteens with “rank beverages.” One group of soldiers, looking to have some fun on a

⁵⁸³ *Eleventh Annual Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture* (Indianapolis: Alexander H. Conner, 1869), 376.

⁵⁸⁴ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 9* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1983), 129.

rail trip from Cincinnati to Indianapolis released “the pipe of a watering tank...just as the one passenger coach of the train came slowly up.” The water drenched the passengers who were forced to remain in their soggy clothes until they arrived at their destination.”⁵⁸⁵

Similar to other areas where military camps were stationed, prostitutes became an increasingly common sight as the city grew.⁵⁸⁶ In April of 1862, an article reprinted from a Cairo, IL newspaper showed the attitude toward undesirables in the city. It described a “great thing in the way of ridding this town of the hosts of disreputable females.” The story describes the scene:

There was a floating craft somewhere in the upper portion of the town, near the stone depot tied to a tree some dozen rods or more from the levee, occupied as a brothel, into which were congregated a crowd of abandoned females and their no less abandoned male associates. Despairing of ridding the town of their presence by a legitimate method, a Provost Marshal’s guard, last night, cut the rope and towing the craft with its occupants out into the current, cut loose, and started the concern down to Dixie, to delight the first families of chivalrydom. When last heard from, the expedition was gaily floating down the broad Mississippi, nine miles below Columbus. They had hoisted a white flag—a white petticoat—and if they escape the dangers of the flotilla, and succeed in eluding the diligence of artillerymen at Fort Pillow, and the rebel gunboats, they will speedily grace the sweet scented city of Memphis with their odorous presence.⁵⁸⁷

Furthermore, in November of 1862, Fletcher noted that “I found lewd women had been sleeping in my stable & I got an officer to go for them.”⁵⁸⁸ A year later, he was forced to

⁵⁸⁵ George Julian in Boyer, Margrette, “Morgan’s Raid in Indiana” *Indiana Magazine of History* 8 (1912): 162.

⁵⁸⁶ One excellent discussion of prostitutes in the Civil War Era is seen in Catherine Clinton, *Public Women and the Confederacy* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999).

⁵⁸⁷ *Daily State Sentinel*, April 29, 1862.

⁵⁸⁸ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 8* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1981), 246.

“go for the Mayer to send a police force to take 5 or 6 abandoned women who are encamped in my English woods. There have been squads of them taken up on my farm the last year. Many dress in soldiers clothes.”⁵⁸⁹ Including the soldiers’ rendezvous in 1865, the issue of prostitution became significantly larger as the war dragged on. The *Indiana State Sentinel* on May 23, 1864 reprinted an article from the *Winstead Herald*. It stated that New Haven had six hundred prostitutes “but it should be considered that New Haven has been little else than a military camp for the last three years, and prostitution follows military operations like a hideous shadow.”⁵⁹⁰ The placement of Camp Morton as a major western military site made certain that a large number of prostitutes in the city. These events suggest that Hoosiers were incredibly anxious about having prostitutes in their city. The earliest years of settlement saw few discussions of prostitution, as community members knew each other, kin networks remained strong, and outsiders were unwelcome. The placement of Camp Morton in the city ensured that Hoosiers would become active in enforcing laws against them and were interested to hear about how other towns dealt with the perceived problem.

The success of the city as a transportation and rail hub also made it a military target. In the summer of 1863, John Hunt Morgan crossed the Ohio River and invaded the North in an attempt to draw Union armies away from their campaign goals in the southern military theater. Many Indianapolis residents immediately feared the advance of Confederate Raiders due to the cities’ relevance as a crucial transportation hub and,

⁵⁸⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 8* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1981), 470.

⁵⁹⁰ *Indiana State Sentinel*, May 23, 1864.

according to Harry Smith, the five thousand prisoners held at Camp Morton.⁵⁹¹ In addition, Morgan believed that he could force Union generals to turn their attention to civil unrest on the home front. The large number of Copperheads and reputation of Indiana as a state with considerable southern sympathies made it an easy choice for Morgan's strategy.⁵⁹²

Hoosiers' faced the problem of how to defend their state during the stunning raid. Fervent Union supporter Governor Morton, in response to calls for aid in defense of Louisville, had sent the Seventy-first Indiana, two companies of the Third Indiana and the Twenty-third battery. Southern Indiana all the way to Indianapolis was left with little defense. In order combat the military threat to the region, Governor Morton called out the Indiana Legion and asked citizens to form militias for the defense of the city. The General Order of July 9, 1863, resulted in a stunning muster of 65,000 men from across the state.⁵⁹³ 45,000 of the new militia were ordered to block Morgan's potential progress by felling trees and tearing down bridges across the region. The remaining 20,000 were stationed at Military Park just west of the circle on Washington Street in Indianapolis. George Julian, a volunteer from Wayne County, noted that "Indianapolis was acreep with would-be soldiers, and trains from all directions were continually bringing in new crowds."⁵⁹⁴

Morgan's ill-fated raid turned east near Salem, IN to stay close to the Ohio River and saved Indianapolis from the "eight days of war." Hoosiers, although unprepared to

⁵⁹¹ David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994): 1018.

⁵⁹² Boyer, Margrette, "Morgan's Raid in Indiana" *Indiana Magazine of History* 8 (1912): 150-151.

⁵⁹³ Boyer, Margrette, "Morgan's Raid in Indiana" *Indiana Magazine of History* 8 (1912): 153.

⁵⁹⁴ Boyer, Margrette, "Morgan's Raid in Indiana" *Indiana Magazine of History* 8 (1912): 162.

fight, were willing to defend their city. Fletcher noted that “town full of Soldiers, all the public grounds are covered with them many come in to obtain arms which are being served out as fast as possible.”⁵⁹⁵ He continued, two days later after Morgan moved toward Cincinnati, that “Troops are drilled continually here & a good spirit of patriotism manifested.”⁵⁹⁶ George Julian recalled, referring to the volunteers, that “one wag, in describing it, said that the participants went battle scared but they came back battle scarred.”⁵⁹⁷

While Morgan’s Raid failed to create the kind of statewide uprising that would change the course of the war, it did create a political flashpoint.⁵⁹⁸ The advent of Morgan’s troop into the state gave rise to declarations of disloyalty. Blame for the raid was bandied both ways. An article in the *Indiana State Sentinel* argued in defense of an attack from the *Indianapolis Journal* suggesting that local Democrats invited Morgan’s Raid. It stated that “The Journal, the Chicago Tribune, the Cincinnati Gazette and Commercial, and all the other radical Abolition papers and speakers, big and little, have been proclaiming for the past two years that the North was divided... There is not a rebel in the South, if he read and accepted the statements of any of these prints, but would believe that the Democracy of the Northwest were ready and anxious to slide the Northwestern States into the Southern Confederacy.”⁵⁹⁹ Far from supporting Morgan’s

⁵⁹⁵ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 8* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1981), 174.

⁵⁹⁶ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 8* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1981), 177.

⁵⁹⁷ George Julian in Boyer, Margrette, "Morgan's Raid in Indiana" *Indiana Magazine of History* 8 (1912): 163.

⁵⁹⁸ Boyer, Margrette, "Morgan's Raid in Indiana" *Indiana Magazine of History* 8 (1912): 163; for a historiographical examination of the Copperhead movement in Indiana, see Thomas Rodgers, "Copperheads or a Respectable Minority: Current Approaches to the Study of Civil War-Era Democrats" *Indiana Magazine of History* 109 (2013): 114-146.

⁵⁹⁹ *Indiana State Sentinel*, July 20, 1863.

raid, Democratic paper editors pronounced that “A common duty to each other and a common sense of danger, call upon every citizen to give his personal efforts, his influence and his means to drive the audacious foe from our soil and to preserve peace within our borders.” The article, although scathingly attacking the handling of the war by Morton and Lincoln proclaimed that “the people of Indiana can do this, and they will. From every part of the State will come strong arms and stout hearts to stop the progress of the invaders and hurl them back from whence they came.”⁶⁰⁰

Morgan’s Raid brought political solidarity to the region. However, as noted in Chapter Five, labor issues emerged in the city during the 1850s and grew during the Civil War era because of the improved transportation infrastructure and resultant economic transition. By the end of the conflict, there were several trade unions in Indianapolis including one for mechanics and another for newspaper typographers.⁶⁰¹ More intense research is required but one reason for the increase in labor activity may be rooted in the rise of a working class. In the 1857 city directory, an examination of resident occupations shows that 254 residents were listed as laborers and there were approximately five thousand heads of households in the city.⁶⁰² This shows that roughly 0.5% of the population in 1857 were laborers. These self-declared laborers were also predominantly of Irish or German heritage.⁶⁰³ The influx of immigrants during the

⁶⁰⁰ *Daily State Sentinel*, July 10, 1863.

⁶⁰¹ Edward Leary, *Indianapolis: The Story of a City* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970), 70; David Bodenhamer and Robert Barrows, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994), 886.

⁶⁰² A.C. Howard, *Directory for the City of Indianapolis* (Indianapolis: A.C. Howard Publisher, 1857). Further research will do well to examine the number of workers at the major employing institutions in the city to determine the role of labor in the city.

⁶⁰³ A.C. Howard, *Directory for the City of Indianapolis* (Indianapolis: A.C. Howard Publisher, 1857).

previous decade and the predominant discrimination toward outsiders explains the significant number of names from German and Irish descent.⁶⁰⁴ By 1867, the percentage of laborers in the Indianapolis city directory had increased to 5% of the overall workforce.⁶⁰⁵ The large increase in the number of people listed as laborers suggests that there was a lack of economic opportunity in the city to enter professional trades. There is also a decidedly higher number of Anglo-oriented names in the directories, which suggests that the labor supply and wage demands were reaching across ethnic lines. The rise of those unions, and their demands for higher wages suggest that a glut of employees emerged in the city that the local economy could not handle.⁶⁰⁶ As a result of supply and demand pressures on the labor market, the increase in the number of laborers is further support that the transition to capitalism, as described by Christopher Clark, was complete.⁶⁰⁷

Another strain of the Civil War era was the increasing urbanization that caused cities to swell rapidly before the necessary infrastructure was in place to handle population pressures.⁶⁰⁸ Marion County grew by over 80% during the 1860s from 39,855

⁶⁰⁴ Irish names such as O'Brian, O'Brien, O'Connell, O'Leary, O'Niel and German names, including Meyer, Meier, Werbe, Wert, and Deitz were common in the city directory for 1857. These ethnic names were more likely to be associated with laborers but this work does not contain any methodical examination.

⁶⁰⁵ *Edwards Annual Directory* (Indianapolis: Edwards & Boyd, 1867). The extremely large number of heads of household in the 1867 city directly calls for a different methodology. Instead of examining the individual occupations of each household, the occupation of each household at the top of each column was taken and extrapolated to come up with the number listed here. There were two columns per page, and 222 pages with names listed. Out of those 444 columns, 22 household heads were listed as laborers which calculates out to 5%.

⁶⁰⁶ See also Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era: 1850-1880*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1995), 446-449.

⁶⁰⁷ Christopher Clark argues that the rise of supply and demand over workforce wages is one of the key factors of a fully capitalist society. See "Rural America and the Transition to Capitalism," in *Journal of the Early Republic*, 19 (1996): 223-236.

⁶⁰⁸ Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

to 71, 939 while Indianapolis grew by nearly 160% over the same period from 18,611 residents to 48,244. This massive urban growth created serious problems for local government and especially charity organizations that dealt with the poor. The continuation of reform movements in the early nineteenth century pivoted after the Civil War as cities grew so large that they became impersonal spaces and the population turnover removed the social safety nets present a generation earlier. The increasing poverty of industrialized workers and the lack of support networks led to a rise in welfare rolls. The increasing stress and the influx of foreigners on public assistance caused a reactionary rejection of social welfare as a public good. As Lisa Levenstein notes, “in the second half of the nineteenth century...public officials either drastically reduced the value of their relief grants or abolished them altogether.”⁶⁰⁹

One excellent example of the response by social welfare organizations to the increasing urbanization and anonymity of Indianapolis is seen in a report “Investigations and Recordkeeping” by J. F. Wright, a local social worker. Wright, in response to problems caused by “the great tramp evil which has cursed this country ever since the war” argued that the city of Indianapolis should create a set of records that would make it easier to organize the deserving poor from the undeserving.⁶¹⁰ Wright notes in his report that if the “conditions of life were not thus rendered easy for this vast army of waste manhood, the great bulk of the tramp evil would long since have disappeared.”⁶¹¹ He uses the example of the James and Mary Smith family to show how the records allowed

⁶⁰⁹ Lisa Levenstein, “Deserving and Undeserving Poor” in *Poverty in the United States: An Encyclopedia of History, Politics and Policy*, ed. Gwendolyn Mind et al. (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2004): 227.

⁶¹⁰ *Proceedings of the First Indiana State Conference of Charities* (Indianapolis: The Board of State Charities of Indiana, 1890), 30.

⁶¹¹ *Proceedings of the First Indiana State Conference of Charities* (Indianapolis: The Board of State Charities of Indiana, 1890), 30.

officials to follow their criminal misconduct after they returned from Illinois to escape criminal charges. Over the course of their lives, James and Mary were accused of lying about an injury, drinking in excess, refusing to go to the hospital when sick, and keeping a “den of shame for years.”⁶¹² For Wright, the rising number of people on welfare rolls in Marion County reflected the supply of public charity. He believed that Hoosiers were taking advantage of the social programs that were in place to provide a safety net to the unfortunate.

Social workers from Fort Wayne and Elkhart present at the conference agreed with the increased need for recordkeeping in the social work profession to prevent graft by dishonest local citizens. One example given before the conference told the story of a contractor earning eighteen dollars per week who appealed to town trustees to pay for coal. When it was discovered that he was bilking the city out of public funds, he flew into a rage and attempted to shoot the trustee who removed him from the rolls.⁶¹³ The social workers were not deaf to complaints from the deserving poor but they were far more focused on eliminating the undeserving poor from the rolls. The end of the conference proceedings recorded a discussion by experienced and inexperienced social workers as to how to determine the difference between the honest and dishonest petitioner. Ultimately, the conference suggested that these professionals get to know their communities intimately so that they could judge the quality of people who applied for support. They were urged to keep detailed records as they familiarized themselves in order to aid the next generation of trustees. The aim of creating a dossier for individuals

⁶¹² *Proceedings of the First Indiana State Conference of Charities* (Indianapolis: The Board of State Charities of Indiana, 1890), 31.

⁶¹³ *Proceedings of the First Indiana State Conference of Charities* (Indianapolis: The Board of State Charities of Indiana, 1890), 33.

and families on public assistance aimed at reestablishing the social familiarity decimated by the drastically increasing population. As Indianapolis grew from secluded township during the 1840s to major economic hub during the Civil War, Hoosiers in Marion County were forced to reconcile the difficulties in managing a major metropolitan city.

Ultimately, the advent of the Civil War brought prosperity to many people in Indianapolis. Prices for goods went through the roof and enriched an entire layer of merchants and transportation specialists.⁶¹⁴ Indianapolis became a shining example of what a railroad city could look like as Union Station set the precedent for the nation. Camp Morton and Hoosier volunteerism during the war allowed Indiana to feel as important of a place in American society than it had since settlement. Prosperity was tangible to those who shopped along Washington Street. Hoosiers regularly bought goods imported from New York City. They could also buy agricultural goods and industrial wares manufactured right in the city if they wished to keep their money in the local economy. Certainly, by the end of the Civil War, Indianapolis was an economic hub that reached into its own hinterland as it established itself as the crossroads of the Midwest.

The city, however, had to contend with the emergence of an urban/rural divide and the divergence of goals with the rest of the state. The laboring classes also increased during the Civil War and an increasing number of people on social welfare created tensions among citizens. For the first time, large numbers of Hoosiers were not able to access the kind of economic independence seen in earlier generations as available land was completely purchased. The number of laborers skyrocketed tenfold during a period

⁶¹⁴ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era: 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1995), 190-196.

of increased industrialization and mechanization. The city was also a haven for prostitution and poverty that was virtually unknown before the railroad arrived. Finally, Hoosiers were caught up in a nationwide economic system that forced a transition in agricultural methods during the Civil War Era. The embargo with the South altered most of the corn and hog trade in Central Indiana as the transportation patterns shifted both east and north. Hoosiers who were accustomed to the traditional methods of corn production were forced to adopt new crops or methods because of the increasing output of the newly emergent Midwestern agricultural regions of Illinois and Iowa who could grow crops more efficiently on virgin soil and transport anywhere on the railroad. For the first time, at the end of the Civil War, Hoosiers in central Indiana were fully entrenched in an economy that allowed regional, national and international markets—rather than the local community—to determine the value of labor.

The story of Indianapolis, from its settlement to the end of the Civil War, represents a fascinating developmental journey. The city emerged on the frontier in the wilderness with dreams of establishing a pattern of development similar to those on the East Coast. They believed that their city could become the economic center of the West by adopting the same infrastructure systems and economic patterns present in the rest of the country. Rather than looking at the power of railroads, they were convinced that canals and roads would allow them to get produce to market and make their state the center of western commerce. Reality was not so kind to their dreams. The relatively late start and geographic difficulties present in the city prevented Hoosiers from finishing their canal projects as the Panic of 1837 squeezed the state dry of funding. Marion

County residents were left to deal with the aftermath of a failure unseen in any other state in the Union.

The failure of the canal system, though, may have been a blessing for Hoosiers. The use of river transport dwindled during the nineteenth century as railroads emerged. Not only could railroads operate year-round, they could be built to any destination that escaped the environmental limits demanded by the natural world. The failure of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill during the aftermath of the Panic of 1837 kept the city structurally malleable. Hoosiers never fully adopted water-based transportation systems like Louisville, Cincinnati or Albany because it was never reliable. The developmental turning point emerged when a railroad finally reached the town in 1847. Like the boomtowns of the Far West, Indianapolis and Marion County finally had access to stable markets, which led to a “telescoped” pattern of development where an explosion of activity allowed the city to “catch up” to its water-based neighbors. The arrival of the railroad did as much for Indianapolis as it did for Wichita, Lincoln, Denver or Albuquerque, which, without the railroad, would have remained isolated outposts with few prospects for economic success. By the end of the Civil War, Indianapolis was one of the premier economic hubs of the Midwest. Goods from Chicago flowed Southeast to the other cities of the region over rail, rather than going south on the Mississippi and then up the Ohio to Louisville, Cincinnati, or Pittsburgh.

The railroad also brought drastic improvement to agriculture in the region. In 1850, Marion County lagged far behind other developed urban centers in key agricultural demographics including land values, farm values, and value/improved acre. By 1870, central Indiana Hoosiers could claim that they were on equal footing with the rest of the

Midwest as prices became more balanced and farm sizes fell in line with the rest of the nation. Agricultural output and the prices received for goods increased rapidly and the ability to get cheap goods from the rest of the nation was no longer a major difficulty, as it had been only forty years earlier.

The economic development of Indiana clearly shows that it quickly emerged on an equal footing with other regional cities. The opportunities also brought difficulties as the emergent rail network brought new cultures to the city that challenged the dominant Anglo-Protestant character of the city during the early nineteenth century. Dave Burkhardt and his gang robbed people, horses were stolen, and public drunkenness ran rampant. Few residents, however, raised much fuss about these issues. Occasional newspaper articles begrudged people to behave kindly to their neighbors and city leaders created codes of conduct for market days. The 1840s saw a massive transformation in attitude. The arrival of the railroad changed the local feeling toward crime. The near-instantaneous emergence of outsiders brought by rail construction in the late-1840s created a feeling of anxiety among residents seen in the rest of the United States during the same period. Irish immigrants came to the city looking for work in construction and transportation but brought their drinking habits with them. These perceived outsiders and their strange habits caused residents to take a stand against a phantom crime spree. Residents of Central Indiana responded by establishing the Eagle Creek Marion County Horse Thief Detective Agency and established a semi-judicial way of assuaging their fears of outsiders. The Civil War also brought problems to the region. As a major transportation hub, Indianapolis was the center of troop deployments and a major Civil War prisoner of war camp. These outsiders were a boon to the economy of the city but

also created further anxiety, as soldiers brought drunkenness and violence while POW's made the city a target of Confederate raiders looking to free captives.

What is so important to understand about Indianapolis is that it attempts to grow as an eastern city but had to adopt to a western style of development. Historians must remember that the Midwest is the region between the East and the West. The developmental patterns of those cities and regions also straddled the East/West divide. The Midwest, in the nineteenth century, was a region where new modes of transportation, agriculture, social arrangements, economic models and various other characteristics lost their eastern flavor as Americans reconsidered how to best meet their goals. People in places like Indianapolis were forced to jettison their models of development because the traditional paths were not available. As a result, these people experienced a pattern of growth unlike any river town nearby. The Midwest, far more than historians have stated, was a training ground for people moving beyond the 100th meridian. The widely-studied cities of Cincinnati and Chicago offer exceptional views into the transformation of the region during the nineteenth century, but considering the development of other towns sheds light onto the reality that settling the Midwest was not a singular experience and that the experience of Far Western settlements was not as unique as followers of Walter Prescott Webb would have us believe.

In fact, Indianapolis is an excellent lens through which to understand the western United States during the early nineteenth century. Its place on the frontier until mid-century helps us comprehend the ways that transportation limitations stunted growth of urban areas. Historians examining the city can appreciate how, when, and why labor tensions emerged, how capital markets cropped up, how social institutions propagated,

and how citizens reacted to the economic success of their river-based neighbors, among many other important questions. By understanding places that lacked access to transportation, historians will be able to reexamine the role of the frontier in American life.

Indianapolis is also a useful study for both the old and new histories of capitalism. First, the cities' secluded nature until midcentury shows the way that various factors of development were stunted by lack of transportation access. An even broader comparison of Marion County to other cities in the nation or world than the one done here will show the importance of transportation networks in altering the economic life of a region. The city is also important because it is settled *during* the transition to capitalism. As noted above, Hoosiers in central Indiana had a clear vision for their homes. They wanted to connect to markets as quickly as possible so they could sell their goods to regional and national markets to improve the lives of their families. By examining these details more deeply through a concerted effort to understand the makeup of the community, historians will be able to more fully comprehend a region that was just being settled as the transition to capitalism was occurring in the Northeast. The debate over the transition to capitalism was, arguably, settled by Christopher Clark in 1990, but the most recent analysis we have of the transition to capitalism in the Early West is John Mack Faragher's work from 1986. The arguments put forward in this dissertation are only a starting point for understanding how nineteenth century Americans experienced their lives. At the same time, Indianapolis is an excellent location for study simply because it is antipodal to other regions that were long settled. Rather than rehash the social turmoil created by the breakdown of long-standing economic relationships that were, at times, wrenched apart,

Indianapolis can shed light on how Americans thought when they were not bound by communal ties.

APPENDIX A. SELECTED AGRICULTURAL CENSUS DATA FOR 1850

In 1850, the effects of waterways on the settlement patterns of the Old Northwest were still very visible according to census data. Marion County, after years of promoting eastern style development patterns focusing on canals lagged far behind other Midwestern and eastern cities in terms of agricultural development. In 1850, landlocked Marion County only had 43.1% of its land improved. In contrast, Wayne County in the Whitewater River Valley had 52.5% improved land and Dearborn County in southern Indiana on the Ohio River had 55.2% of its land improved. Tippecanoe County, home to Lafayette on the Wabash River in northwestern Indiana, had 50.8% of its land improved. This suggests that settlement patterns did not simply move from south to north as historians like Donald F. Carmony have suggested, but instead that settlement was influenced by the availability of rivers. Places like Clark County, on the Ohio River, were 43.7% improved but Tipton County and Kosciusko County, in North-Central Indiana away from any major rivers were only 15.6% and 29.7% improved, respectively. It seems that the steady flow of population to the northern part of the state followed waterways as much as roads. As a result, the lack of a river made Marion County a less desirable destination for settlement and improvement because of its secluded nature.⁶¹⁵ Only the site of the political capital gave city residents any added impetus to improve their land.

⁶¹⁵ All census data comes from the University of Virginia Library Historical Census Browser. <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/>, Accessed Dec. 12, 2014.

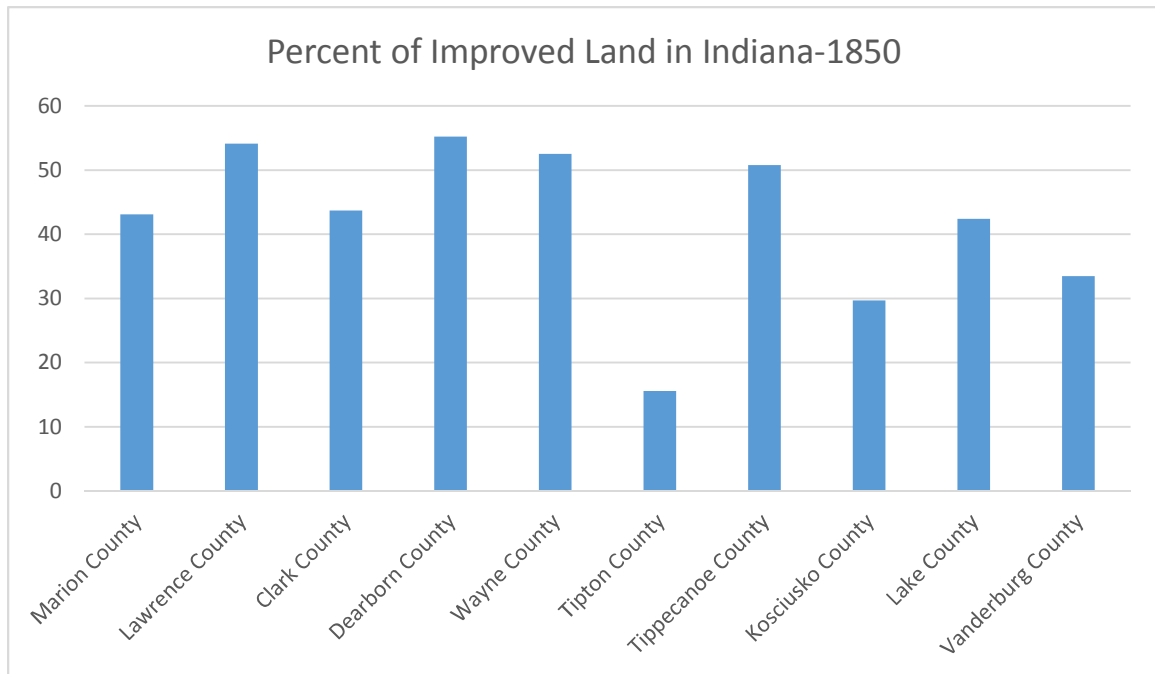


Figure 11: Percent of Improved Land in Indiana-1850

This trend is supported when examining major regional urban centers. The amount of improved land was higher in areas that had more direct contact with the Ohio River and large urban centers. Hamilton County, OH, home to Cincinnati, was 65.3% improved while Jefferson County, KY, home of Louisville, was 57.9% improved. Allegheny County, home to Pittsburgh, also mirrors this trend by having 61.5% of its land improved.⁶¹⁶ The trend is noticeable further east as places like Albany County in New York had 76.7% of its land improved and Essex County, MA had 72.9% of its land improved. In general, the proximity to a useful transportation avenue and a high population rate generally led to a higher rate of improvement in the Old Northwest and the nation. Marion County's lack of a easily navigable river makes it more similar to

⁶¹⁶ The urban counties chosen for this study are based, in part, off Richard Wades' book *The Urban Frontier*. Richard Wade, *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964.

Franklin County, OH, home to Columbus, which was 59% improved, than cities like Louisville or Cincinnati that were geographically closer.⁶¹⁷

The end result of this analysis remains that the frontier was not a line as noted by Frederick Jackson Turner, but more a boundary between those who had easy access to urban area economies and those who didn't. Franklin County, while having market access due to successful canal construction during the 1820s and 1830s, remained secluded from the heavier populations in upstate New York or the Ohio River Valley by distance the same way that Marion County was. Even canal access could not overcome basic problems of distance when the major economic outlets for crops were still in New Orleans or New York City.

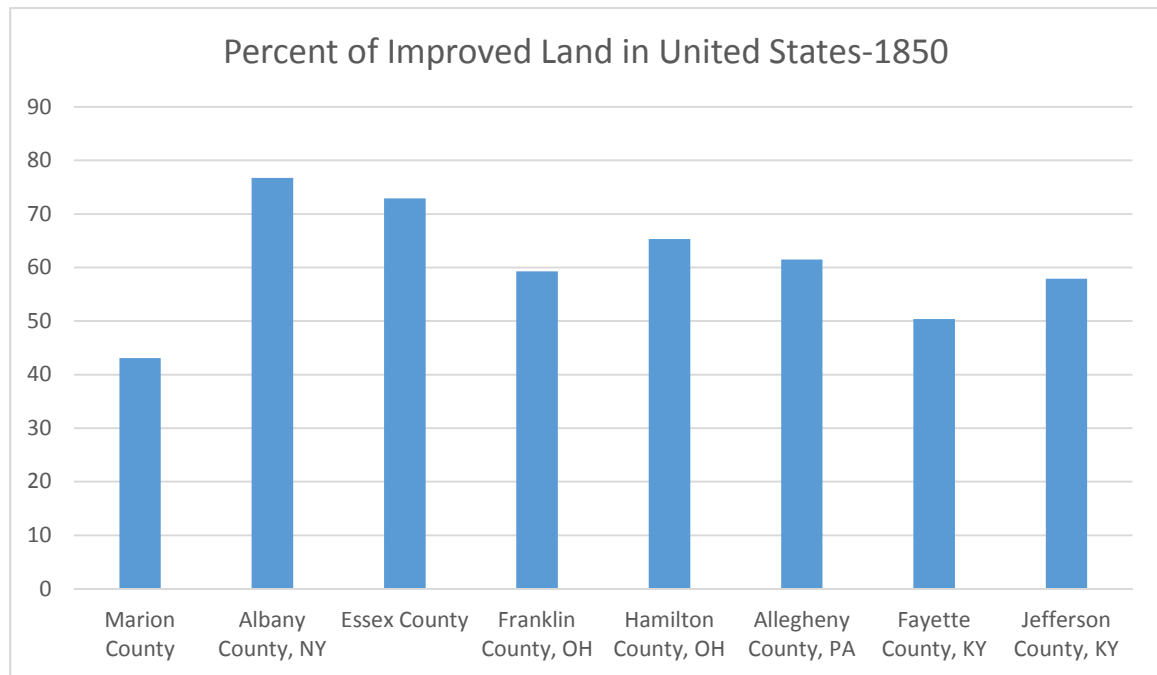


Figure 12: Percent of Improved Land in United States-1850

⁶¹⁷ Franklin County's 59% rating stems from Ohio's ability to complete its canal system before the Panic of 1837 called in debts. Columbus, while still relatively secluded, was able to reach foreign markets via waterway as early as 1833 which explains why their improved land rate was so much higher. For a short history of Columbus and its relationship with the Ohio and Erie Canal, see Ed Lentz, *Columbus: The Story of a City* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 58.

The developmental ties to rivers evident in improved acreage percentages were also seen in farm values. The 1850 census shows that Marion County farms were worth \$2,189 on average while Wayne County farms were worth \$3,016 and Tippecanoe County farms were worth \$2,831. Dearborn County farms were only slightly lower at \$2,386 but still shows the value of river access for increased farm values. Tipton County had an average farm value of \$1,195 and Kosciusko County had an average value of \$1,149. Lake County, adjacent to Chicago, had the lowest average farm value at \$947.

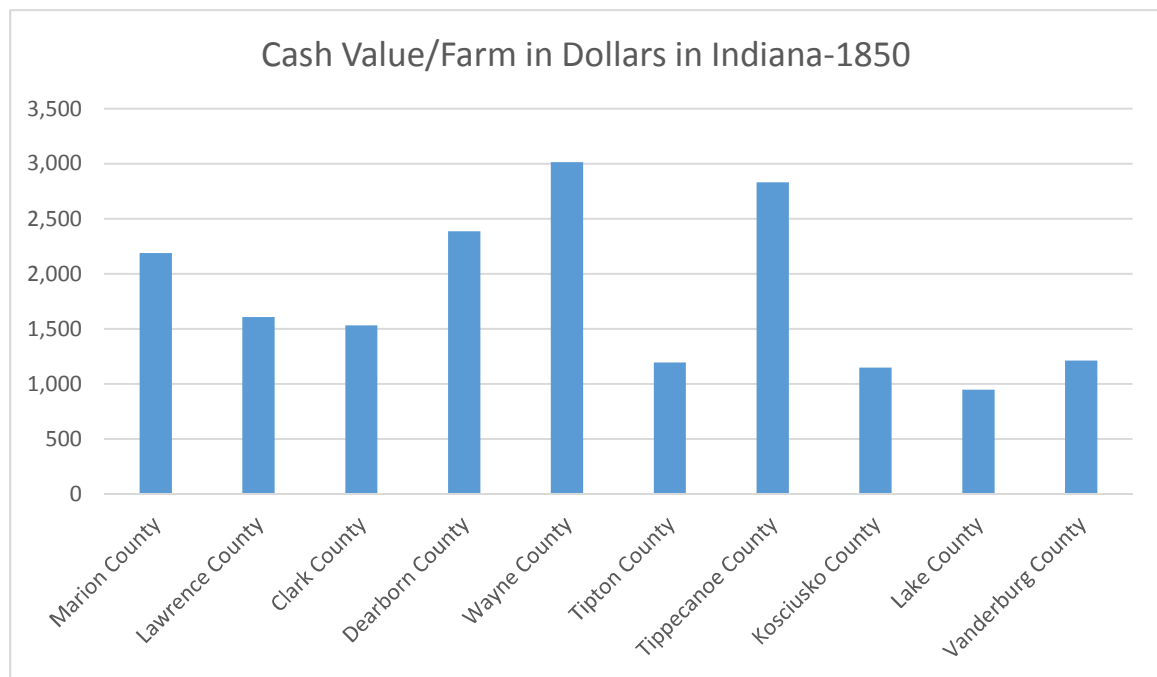


Figure 13: Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in Indiana-1850

Regional and national farm averages, again, for cash value/farm reflect the trend seen in the percentage of improved land noted above. Hamilton County farms were worth \$6,706, Allegheny County farms were worth \$9,438, and Jefferson County farms were worth \$6,150. Fayette County, KY farms were the leading county with an average value of \$12,007. The decreasing value of eastern farms, mostly from decreasing farm sizes, led Albany County acreages to be worth \$3,906 and Essex County farms to be worth \$3,424. Franklin County, OH farms were much more in line with Marion County.

Their average farm value was \$2,376 and reiterates that geographic proximity was not as important as access to water along the transportation frontier.

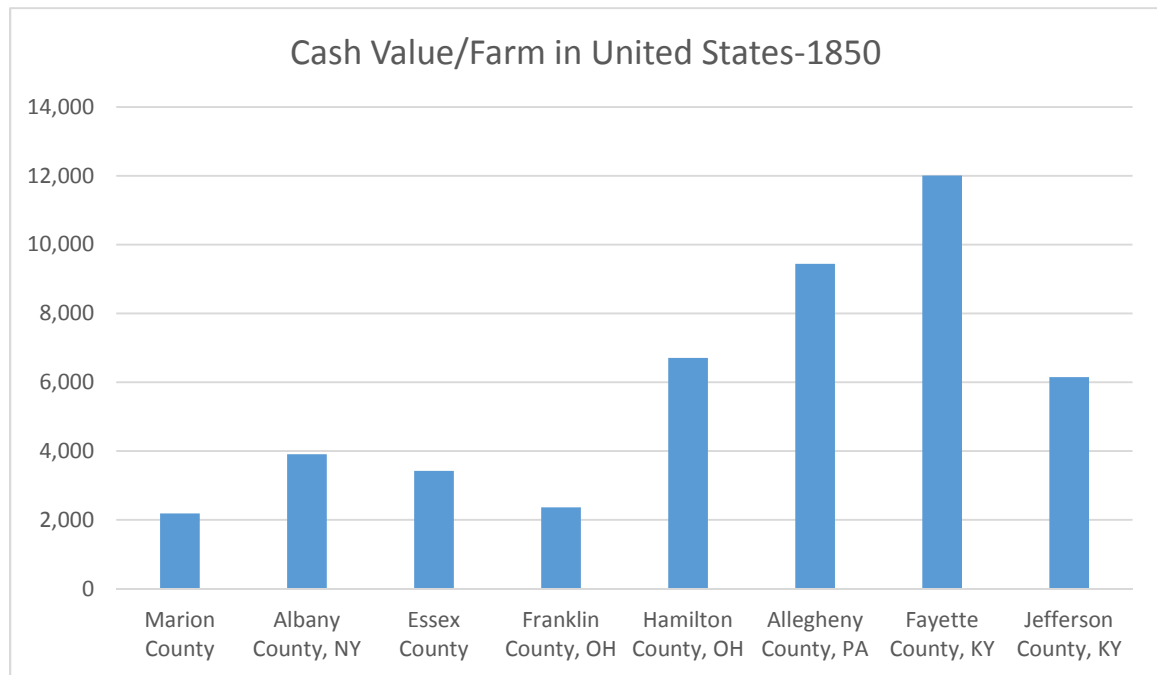


Figure 14: Cash Value/Farm in United States-1850

Average farm values do not tell the whole story. Farm prices per acre are one of the best ways to measure farm worth. Indiana farm prices per acre overwhelmingly show that access to markets via was an incredible factor in average farm value per acre.

Marion County farms, probably getting a boost in price from the arrival of the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad in 1847 and that it was the state capital, were worth \$18.10 an acre on average. That the railroad boosted prices in Marion County is nearly certain, but average farm prices per acre show that rivers were still more important factors in farm prices in most places. While Tippecanoe County farms were only worth \$14.40 per acre, Wayne County farms were worth over \$22.60 per acre and Dearborn County farms were

worth over \$23.40.⁶¹⁸ That Tippecanoe County farms were worth less than those in Marion shows the transition to the significance of rail infrastructure. However, the land prices per acre in those counties are the only ones that are above \$11.00.⁶¹⁹ Lawrence County farms were worth \$7.70 per acre, Tipton County farms were worth \$6.00 per acre and Kosciusko County farms were worth \$8.20.

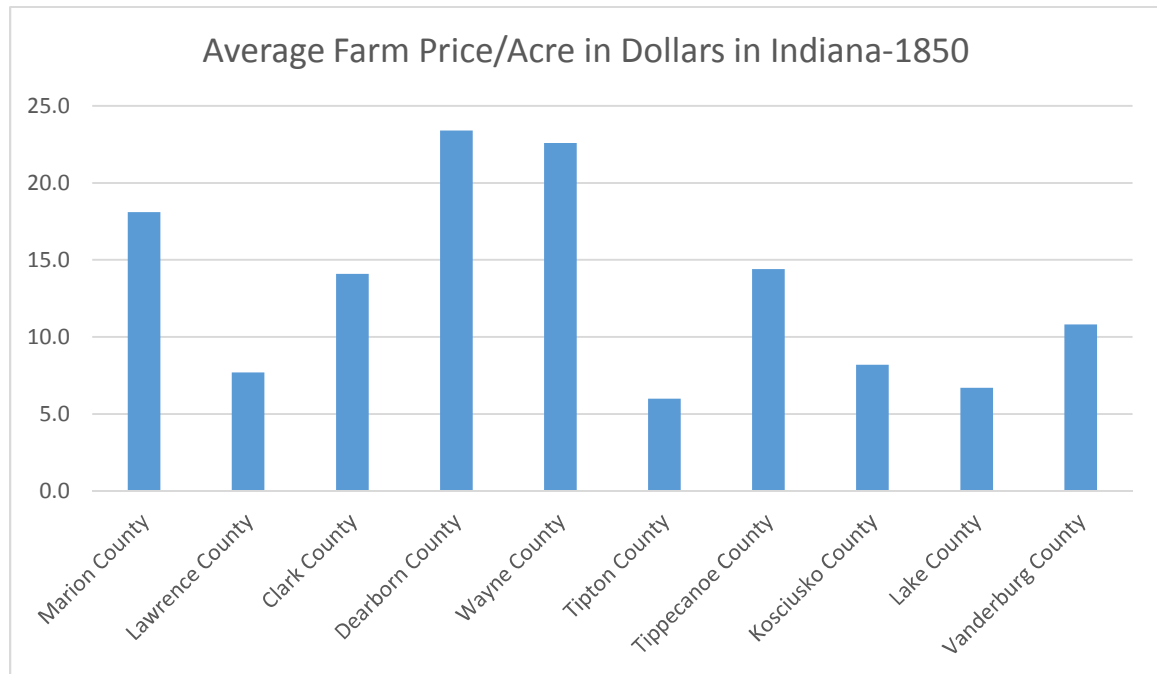


Figure 15: Average Farm Price/Acre in Dollars in Indiana-1850

Average farm values per acre were also larger in other regions that had more developed economies and river access. Hamilton County farms, clearly influenced by the success of Cincinnati as a market center, led the Midwestern region at \$82.90 per acre.

⁶¹⁸ Tippecanoe County farm prices/acre were probably lower because population along the east border of Indiana was longer settled and had access to the Miami and Erie Canal which ran along the western edge of Ohio. Dearborn County was also able to take advantage of the Cincinnati and Whitewater Canal which went all the way to the border between the two states. For information on the Miami and Erie Canal, see Bill Oeters and Nancy Gulick, *The Miami and Erie Canal* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014).

⁶¹⁹ Vanderburgh County, IN, home to Evansville, was the only other county studied that had land values above \$10. Its land values were just under \$11 at \$10.80. For the rest of the examined counties, Kosciusko County was in the lead with an average land value per acre of \$8.20.

Other Midwestern centers were far more reasonably priced but still higher than Marion County. Jefferson County acreages were worth \$34.40, Fayette County farms were valued at \$47.00 per acre and Allegheny County prices were at \$46.70 in 1850. Eastern farms show that the Midwest was taking hold as the nation's agricultural center. Albany County farm values per acre were at \$38.10 and Essex County farms were worth \$46.30, which were both much higher than Marion County, but they were much lower than established urban centers in the Midwest.⁶²⁰ Franklin County again shows that land values per acre were limited in other parts of the Midwest that lacked solid access to established markets. Average acreage prices in that county were at \$24.30 in 1850.

⁶²⁰ The average farm size in Albany County was 102 acres in 1850. This was smaller than any measured county in Indiana other than Vanderburgh County. Albany County farms were also smaller than those in Allegheny, Fayette, and Jefferson County but larger than those in Hamilton and Franklin counties in Ohio which suggests that it was actual farm values that were plummeting in the region as the Midwest produced increasing amounts of agricultural goods on a more efficient scale than the Northeast. For the geographic shift in grain farming, see Paul Gates, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture, 1815-1860* (Armonk: M.E Sharp, Inc., 1960), 163-169.

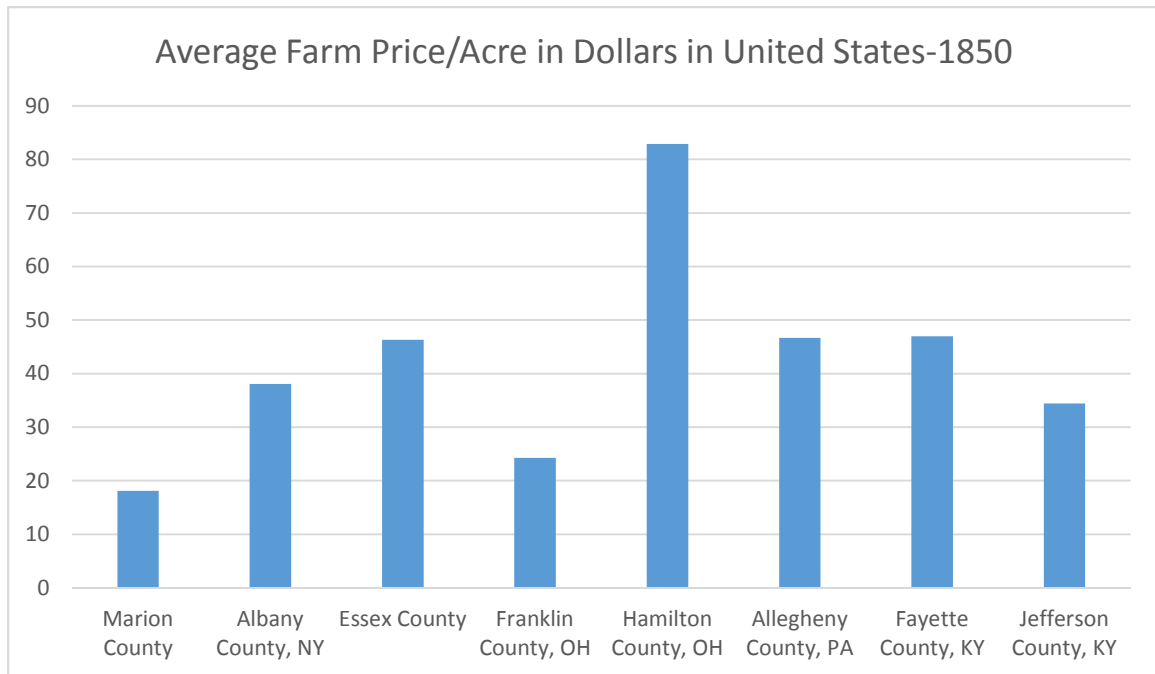


Figure 16: Average Farm Price/Acre in Dollars in United States-1850

The value of improved farm land presents only a slightly different picture on the surface. The value of farm land measured by the 1850 census enumerators included both improved and unimproved land. The value of improved land in Indiana counties suggests that river access was not the only factor that mattered in the price of improved farm land. Marion County improved acreages were worth \$41.90 in 1850.⁶²¹ This value put them in similar categories as Wayne County, at \$43.10, and Dearborn County, at \$42.50, per improved acre. Even Tipton County was relatively high at \$38.50 per improved acre but the value of its improved acres are inflated. The number of improved acres are very small relative to other counties and the low number of implements, farm produce and

⁶²¹ The price of improved acres is calculated the same way as the value of total acres. The number is divided by the total value of farms listed in the census. These figures are inexact because the value of an average parcel of land is unknown. More research is needed to find the average value of improved and unimproved land so more specific calculations can be pursued. Average prices paid for established farms in different years would be an excellent place to begin.

livestock in the county suggest that the high value of Tipton County improved land is influenced heavily by the amount and quality of unimproved land. The value of farm implements was only \$20,711 in 1850 and the number of “market gardens” was only 17. The values of orchards as \$695, the value of animals slaughtered was only \$11,898, and the value of livestock was only \$75,878. By contrast, Marion County’s figures for the same categories were \$114,709, 5,725, \$15,247, \$110,650 and \$360,741, respectively, which shows that there are significantly more improved acres as a part of the total. Thus, the values of the improved acres are less influenced by the value of unimproved acres. Overall, the trend remains similar. There was some variation because of the imprecise nature of the available data but river access increased the value and availability of improved farmland in the state.⁶²²

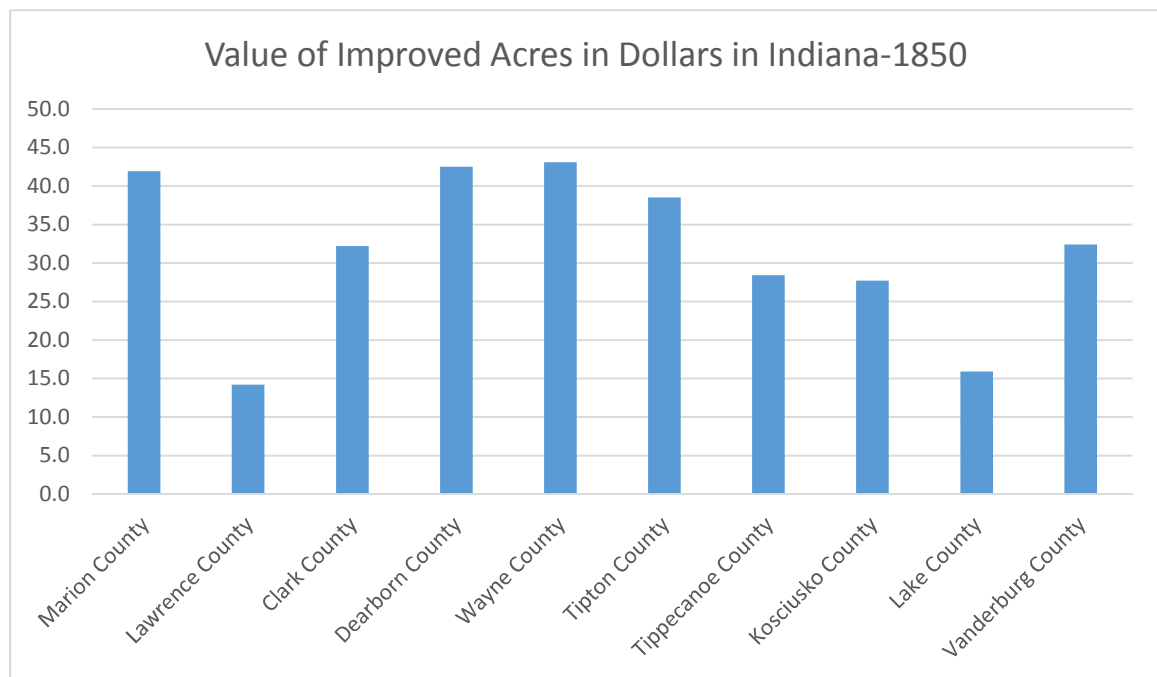


Figure 17: Value of Improved Acres in Dollars in Indiana-1850

⁶²² Marion County almost assuredly received a large boost in the value of improved land because they could begin exporting crops to national markets with significant ease by 1850.

National data also show the increased value of improved farm land when access to transportation networks were available. While Franklin County was roughly in line with Marion County at \$41 per improved acre, Hamilton County led the way with improved land values of \$126.80. Allegheny County had improved land values of \$75.90 per acre. Fayette County had improved land values of \$93.20 and Jefferson County had land values of \$59.40 per acre. Clearly access to river transportation and a large city had a major effect on Midwestern land prices. Northeastern counties showed that their farms were becoming less valuable than Midwestern regions as Albany County improved acres were worth \$49.60 and Essex County values were \$63.50. The values shown here still suggest that, like in the Old Northwest, access to transportation networks and large cities kept the price of farmland higher than those that were more recessed.

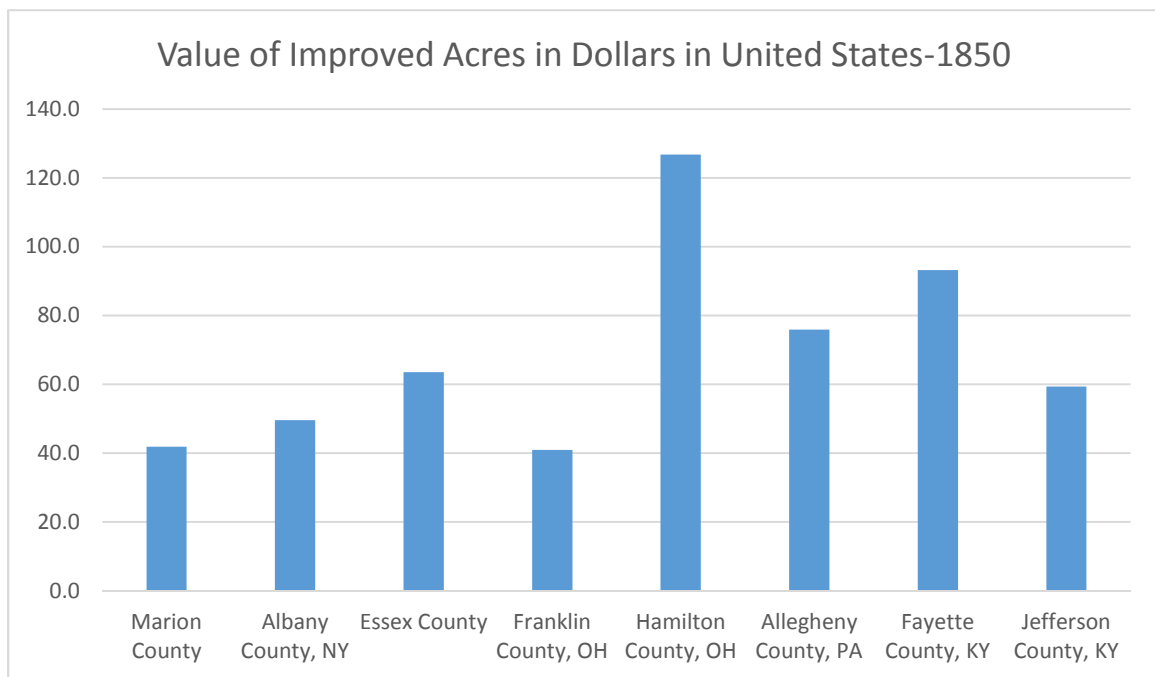


Figure 18: Value of Improved Acres in Dollars in United States-1850

This data will be expanded upon in the next two chapters to show exactly the nature and speed of telescoped development seen in Marion County. For now, suffice to say that this data shows that counties like Marion and Franklin, in which it was relatively difficult to access markets relative to other state or regional areas, lagged behind in their economic development. Even by 1850, when railroads were fully capturing the imagination of most Americans, rivers still had a major effect on land values and development.

The 1850 census shows that central Indiana economic development lagged behind other western regions but the arrival of the railroad in 1847 quickly altered the economic forecast of the area. Hoosiers finally accessed the desired markets that eluded them for nearly three decades. As noted above, Calvin Fletcher noted that over the course of one year that the price for wheat increased from \$.45/bushel in 1846 to \$.68-\$.73/bushel in 1847 “since the R.R. carrs have arrived.”⁶²³ The seemingly boundless opportunity in the city made Hoosiers more optimistic than ever that their city would become the center of the Early Western economy.

⁶²³ Gayle Thornbrough, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol. 4* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1975), 309, 417.

APPENDIX B. SELECTED AGRICULTURAL CENSUS DATA, 1850-1860

The 1860 census shows that Marion County was beginning to reap the advantages of the railroad at a faster pace than cities with established water networks. The Panic of 1837, while hampering immediate development in the city, helped Indianapolis avoid the trap of tying its economy to water-based transportation systems. Like the “phoenix” of Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871 mentioned by Cronon’s impressive work *Nature’s Metropolis*, the infrastructure of Marion County experienced a rebirth fostered by the lack of a stable transportation network before the fire.⁶²⁴ Had the Mammoth Internal Improvements Bill projects been completed, the investment in and upkeep of the canals would have, presumably, siphoned off funding for railroad projects from the Three Percent Fund and other investment sources. The availability of funding for internal improvements without significant competition from canal boosters after economic recovery in the 1840s allowed the state to build railroads on a massive scale and did not have to worry about lobbying to save the increasingly ineffective canal system as happened in Ohio.⁶²⁵

Several major factors showed the positive impact that railroads had for central Indiana farmers than they did for other regions and shows the integration of the area into the larger regional economy. The first major factor showing that Marion County was

⁶²⁴ William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 345-350.

⁶²⁵ The only real push to continue canal building was for the completion of the Wabash and Erie Canal. See Donald Carmony, *Indiana: The Pioneer Era, 1816-1850* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 293-306. Unlike Marion County, the use of canals in Ohio was increasingly contentious as the century wore on. Businesses dependent on canal water lobbied hard to keep them operational while the usefulness of railroads was hard to ignore in the state. See Ohio Historical Society, *History of the Ohio Canals, Their Construction, Cost, Use and Partial Abandonment* (Columbus: Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, 1905), 48-55.

reaping the benefits of the railroad is the percentage of improved land. Marion County was 58.7% improved in 1860 which skyrocketed it to first place in the state.⁶²⁶ Lawrence County was in a close second at 58.6% improved while Wayne at 56.8%, and Tippecanoe at 56.6%, Vanderburgh at 56%, Dearborn at 55.3%, and Clark County, on the Ohio River across from Louisville, followed at 51.1%. The significance of these numbers are hard to miss. Marion County rose from fifth place in 1850 to first by 1860. The arrival of the railroad in 1847 gave impetus for an increased commercial agriculture in the county early on, but the completion of six lines leading directly to the city by 1853 made commercial agriculture a very popular option for many ruralites. The success of commercial agriculture in the county by 1860 is seen in the jump in the amount of improved land. Marion County increased its percentage of improved land by 15.6% from 1850-1860. Of the other significantly improved counties in 1860, only Vanderburgh County increased more than Marion County with an increase in improved land jumping 22.5%.⁶²⁷ Many of the other highly improved counties of the state in 1860 showed significantly less increase than Marion County. Lawrence County increased only 4.5%, Clark County increased 7.4%, Wayne County increased 4.3%, Tippecanoe County increased 5.8% and Dearborn County increased a paltry 0.1% during the period. The only other counties that improved on the same level as Marion County are Kosciusko, in northern Indiana, which improved

⁶²⁶ At least amongst the ten counties measured. More research needs to be done to examine every county in the state to make a final judgment but the trends stated here should hold up very well. The counties chosen to be representative were deliberate and represent the various types of counties in the state at the time.

⁶²⁷ Vanderburgh County's increase is probably due to the arrival of the Evansville and Crawfordsville Railroad and the completion of the Wabash and Erie Canal by 1853. They were to be the terminus for the Wabash and Erie Canal as part of the Mammoth Internal Improvements Act, but the Panic of 1837 prevented the completion of the project. As a result, it seems that the rise of Vanderburgh County is due to having a lower starting point in 1850 and catching up to other Ohio River counties by 1860, instead of an experience like that of Marion County which started low because of seclusion.

10.1% and Tipton County which improved 21.7%. These rates of increase occurred for similar reasons seen in Marion County. By 1860, railroads reached these counties and gave impetus for farmers to increase the output of their agricultural production.

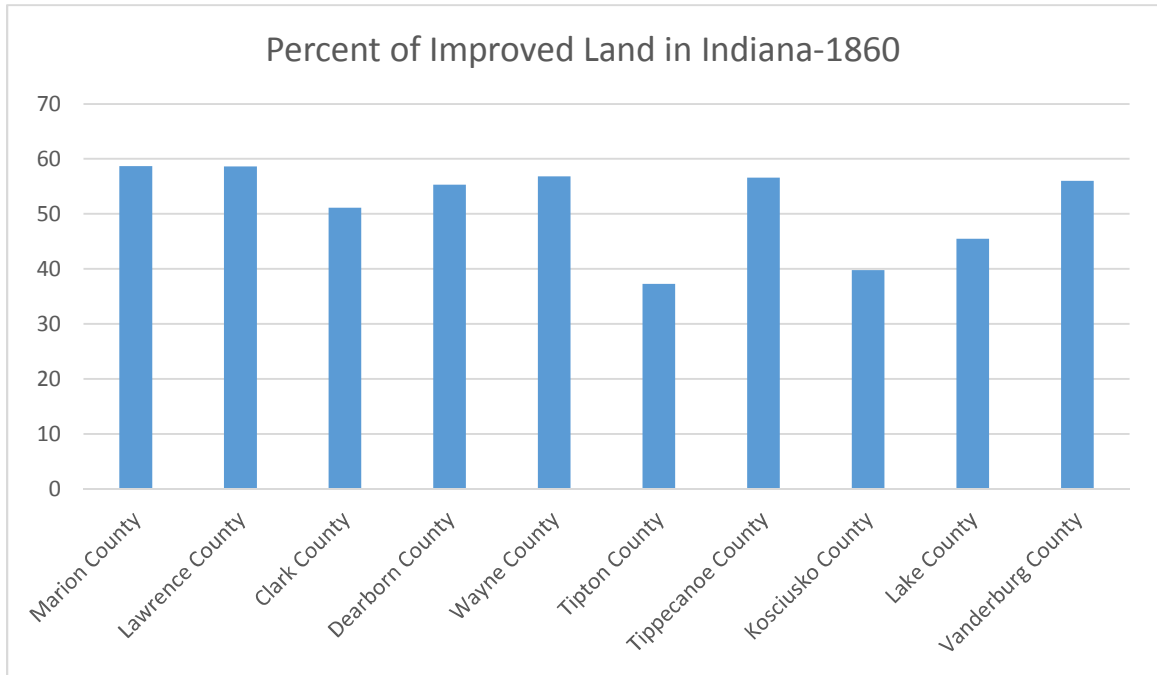
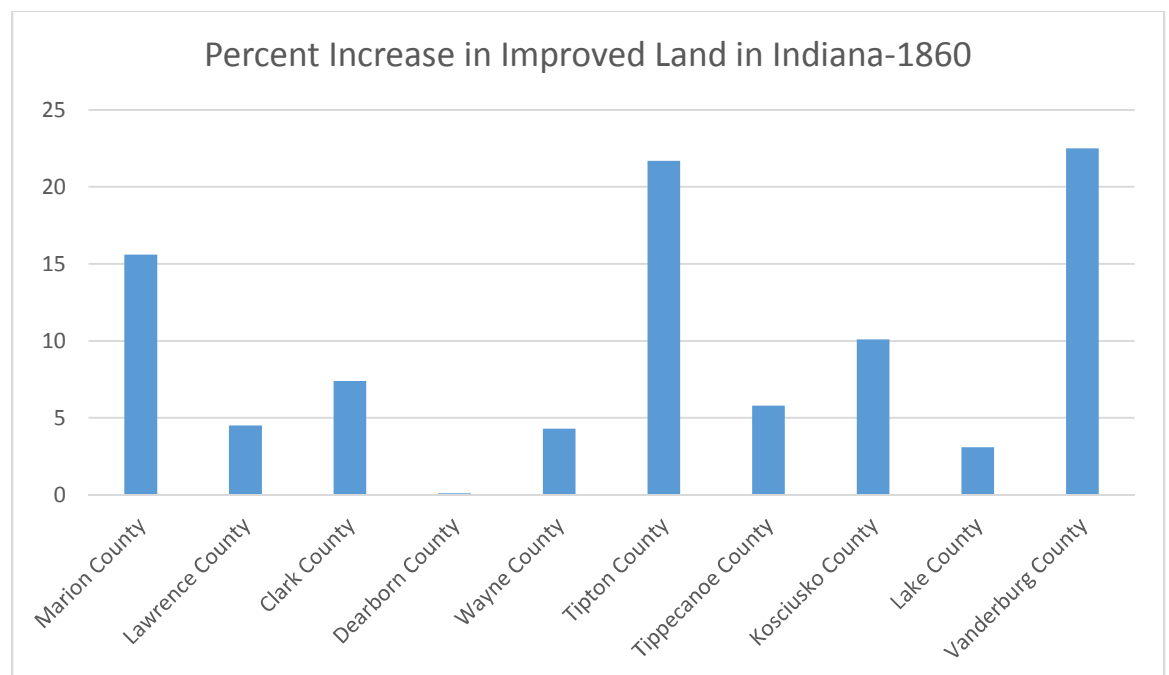


Figure 19: Percent of Improved Land in Indiana-1860



The regional and national numbers again show that Marion County benefitted disproportionately from the expanded railroad access achieved during the 1850s. While Marion County still lagged behind longer settled and developed counties, the rates of increase were much lower than in the Hoosier capital. Hamilton County, OH was 69.4% improved in 1860, but the ten year increase in improved land was limited to 3.9%. Jefferson County, KY was 66.7% improved but only saw an increase of 8.8% and Allegheny County was 69.1% improved for a 7.6% increase. Northeastern counties also reflect this trend. Albany County was 80.7% improved in 1860 but only increased its improved land by 4% from 1850. Essex County was 77% improved for an increase of 4.1%. What this shows is that the longer settled regions of the Midwest and Northeast were able to improve very quickly during the Canal Era, but that their rates of improvement were limited thereafter because of the early commitment to water travel.

George Rogers Taylor described the weakness of water travel, saying that “at first railroads often stimulated water transportation...but when through rail routes were completed [as they had been by 1860] the steamboats found their erstwhile helper their deadly enemy.”⁶²⁸ The evidence for this is seen in the relationship between water and land-oriented counties in the 1850s. The infrastructure systems constructed in the other urban counties by 1840 were oriented toward river traffic, but the meteoric rise of railroads left Hamilton, Jefferson and Allegheny counties hampered by a transportation system that was rapidly becoming obsolete. Not even Franklin County, OH, which was less tied toward water travel, matched the development of Marion County. In 1860, Franklin County was improved 66.7% but its increase in improvement was only 7.7%.

⁶²⁸ George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution: 1815-1860* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1951), 72.

The slightly higher percentage of improved land and the lower rate of improvement are probably due to the fact that Ohio was able to more successfully complete a significant portion of the Ohio and Erie Canal before the Panic of 1837 hit.⁶²⁹ Ohio, as a whole, was more tied to water transportation than Indiana and fewer residents were starved for market access when railroads finally emerged.⁶³⁰ Ohio residents were able to improve their land at their own pace up through 1850 because navigable river access was functional in most of the state. In Indiana, the failure of the Central Canal starved Hoosiers for market access. Once the availability of railroads arose in the region, an explosion of market opportunities emerged in Marion County that was a less momentous change in other urban centers in the Midwest, and led to a major incentive for increased agricultural improvements and improved land.⁶³¹

⁶²⁹ Ronald Shaw, *Canals for a Nation: The Canal Era in the United States, 1790-1860* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990), 208-209. See also Harry Schreiber, *Ohio Canal Era: A Case Study of Government and the Economy, 1820-1861* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969), 151.

⁶³⁰ See Jeremy Atack, et al., "Did Railroads Induce or Follow Economic Growth?: Urbanization and Population Growth in the American Midwest, 1850-1860" (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2009): 6.

⁶³¹ Fayette County is not included in this chart because of enumerator error in the census. The 99% improved rate for 1860 is highly unlikely due to several factors. For one, the percentage of improved land in 1850 is 50.4% and is 77.3% in 1870. No other county examined sees the drastic rise and fall felt in Fayette County. At the same time, crops, livestock and land prices also stay relatively similar throughout the 1850, 1860 and 1870 census schedules. There is no drastic increase in hay or oat production, or increased river traffic, in Fayette County which casts further doubt on the validity of the enumerator's numbers.

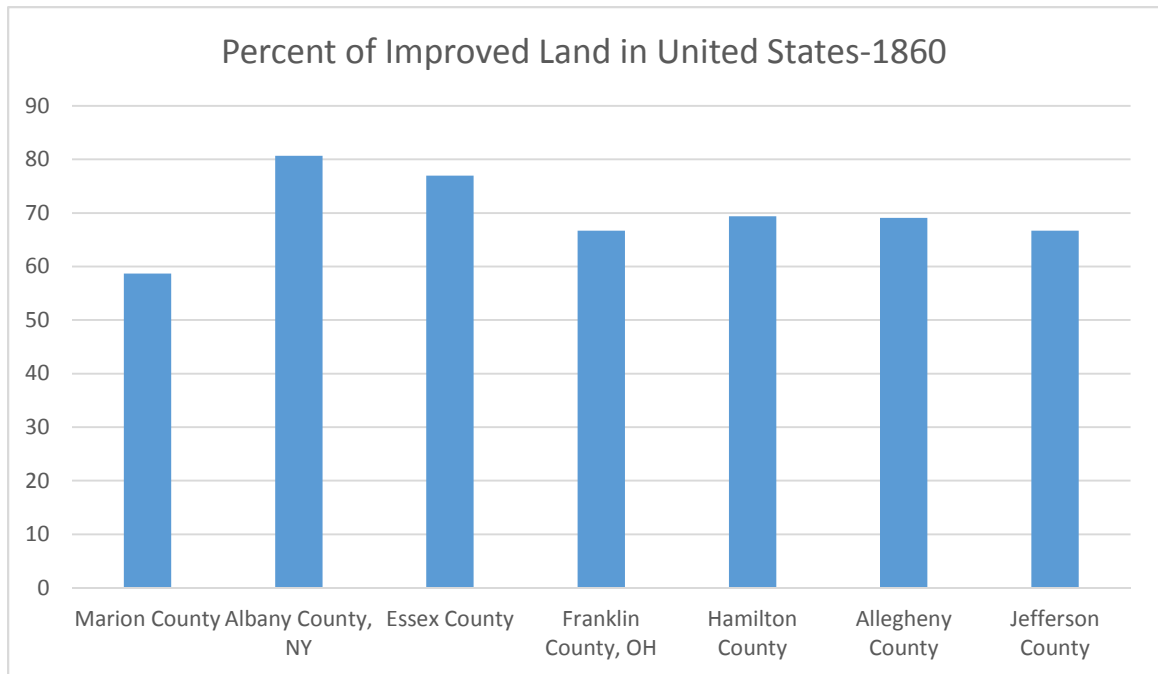


Figure 21: Percent of Improved Land in United States-1860

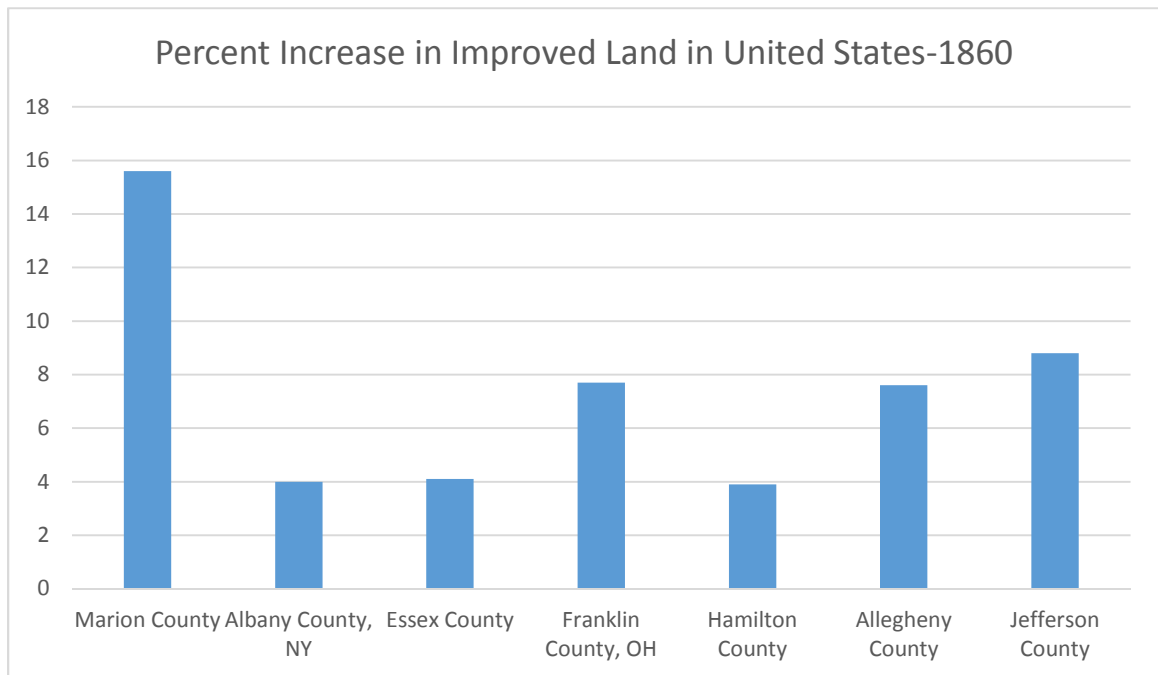


Figure 22: Percent Increase in Improved Land in United States-1860

Longer-established Midwestern counties, all heavily oriented toward river trade in the antebellum era, show that rivers allowed a region to improve drastically early on because available transportation technology allowed for market access. However, the railroad did not help them improve their relative positions to land-locked areas as demonstrated by average farm prices. By 1860, the increasing number of railroads in the Midwest drastically altered the relationship between farm prices and river access. The average price of a Marion County farm rose to \$5,338, an increase of 143.8%. This price increase is only matched by Lake County, adjacent to Chicago and Lake Michigan, which increased average values by 149.2%.⁶³² The rest of the state saw improved land prices, but nowhere near the increases seen in Marion or Lake County. Lawrence and Clark counties saw the next highest growth at 107.7% and 107.2%, respectively but they were the only other two counties that doubled their land values. Wayne County nearly accomplished the feat but only saw a 93.2% increase. Other counties were not even that lucky. Kosciusko County increased 69.8% and Tipton County increased 62.6% showing an uptick in values from rail access that emerged during the 1850s. Showing the early faltering of water-based infrastructure in the Midwest, the paltriest increases were seen in counties with water access. Tippecanoe County only increased its land values 41.1% by 1860. Dearborn County's average farm value only increased 23.1%, showing the relative decline of Cincinnati as a major transportation hub by the beginning of the Civil War.⁶³³

⁶³² Lake County farms also started out significantly lower. In 1850, the average farm price in Lake County was only \$947. In 1860, the average price was \$2,362. The increase in Lake County land value was due to the rise of Chicago as an important transportation center in much the same fashion that Marion County land values improved as railroads connected to Indianapolis.

⁶³³ George Rogers Taylor briefly mentions the decline of Midwestern rivers as an effective mode of transport compared to railroads. See George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1951), 70-73.

These mixed numbers suggest that the infrastructure system of the American Midwest was in flux during the 1850s. The largest rises were seen in land-locked counties without a canal that gained railroad access during the decade. River oriented counties like Lawrence or Clark still had respectable gains during the period, but were outpaced by those that obtained rail access by 1860. Land-locked cities that obtained rail access did begin to increase in value, but the draw of a county with water access was still greater than counties like Kosciusko that did not have a major urban center.

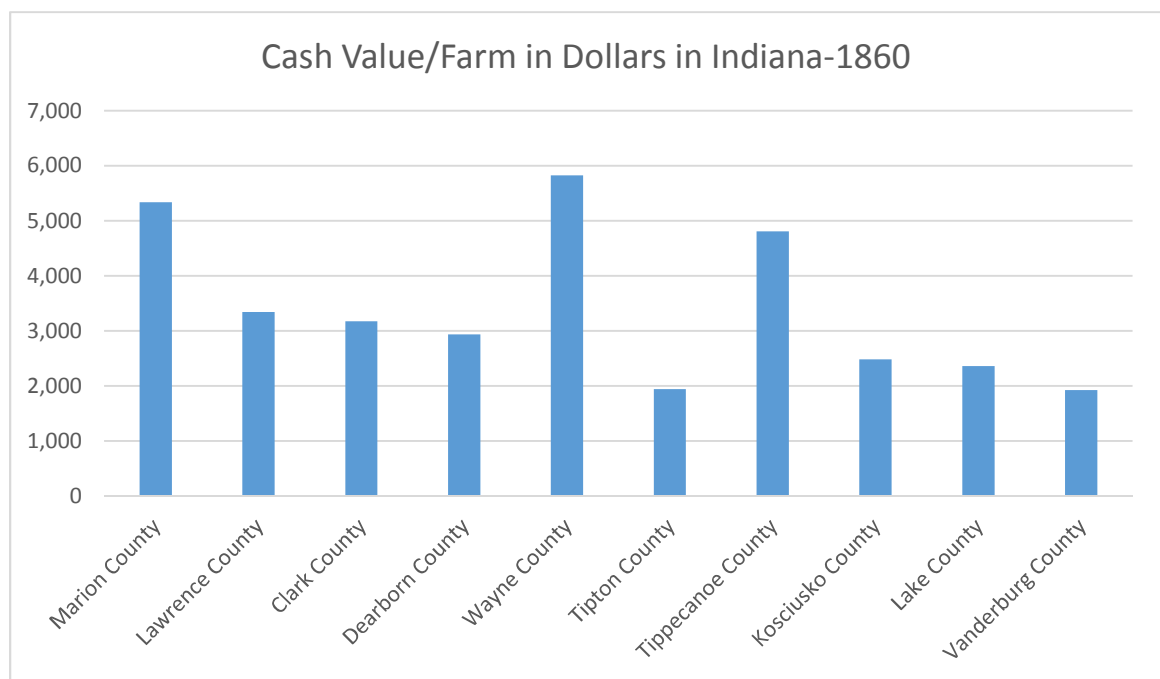


Figure 23: Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in Indiana-1860

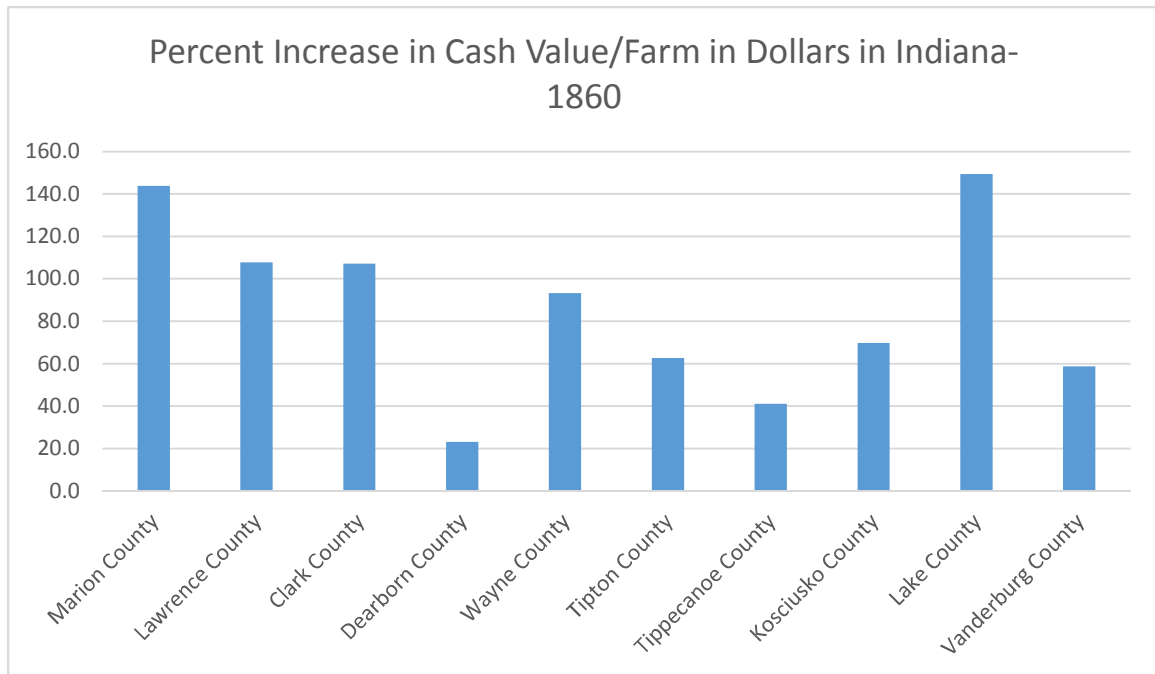


Figure 24: Percent Increase in Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in Indiana-1860

This story is repeated in other areas of the Midwest. Longer established urban centers and their communities did not improve as much as those that obtained rail access during the 1850s. Franklin County, which acquired rail access in 1850, saw its average farm price increase by 110.4%. Fayette County increased its average farm value 61.8% and Jefferson County increased by 65.2%. The decline of agriculture in Hamilton County is seen clearly as average farm values *decreased* by 1.1%, and in Allegheny County, they *decreased* by a whopping 40.6%. The stagnation of Ohio River cities was equaled by Northeastern urban areas. Albany County average farm prices increased 21.5% and Essex County farm price averages only increased 11.9%. These figures show that the transformation in American agriculture was shifting toward the Midwest and that the relative power of that region was increasing along railroad tracks. The more fertile and open land of the Midwest along with the increased access caused by railroads

allowed for a relative increase in the price of an average farm. Settlers who were smart or lucky enough to emigrate a place without a river, but obtaining a railroad during the 1850s, had a distinct advantage in the new rail-driven economy.

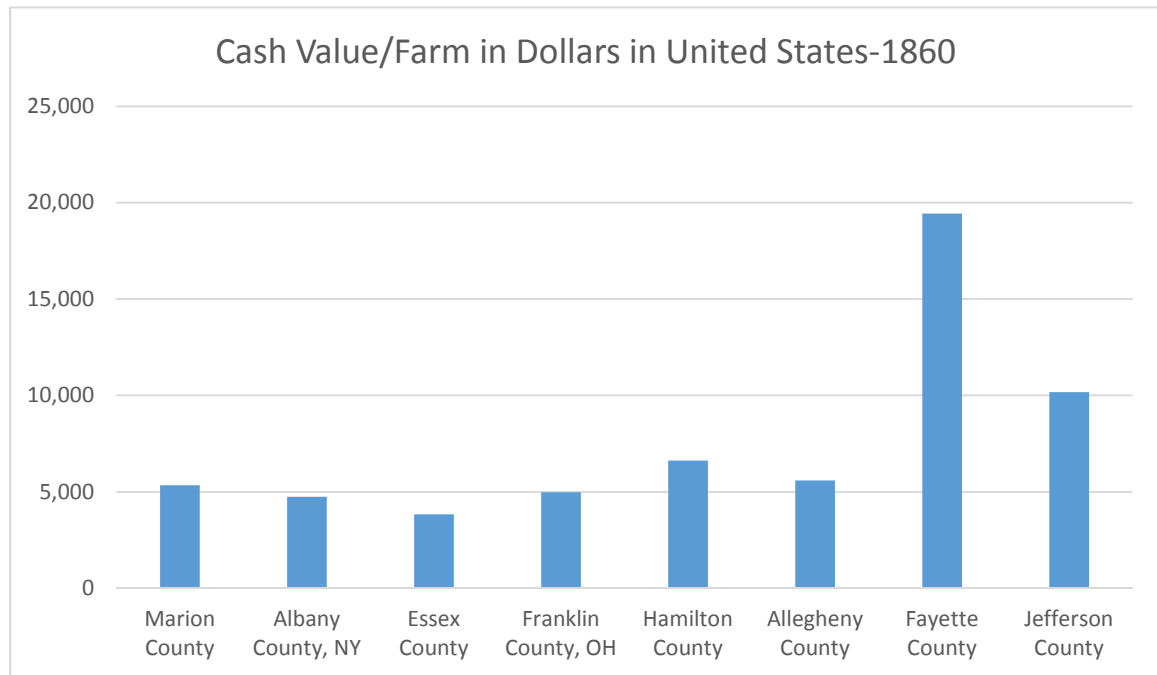


Figure 25: Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in United States-1860

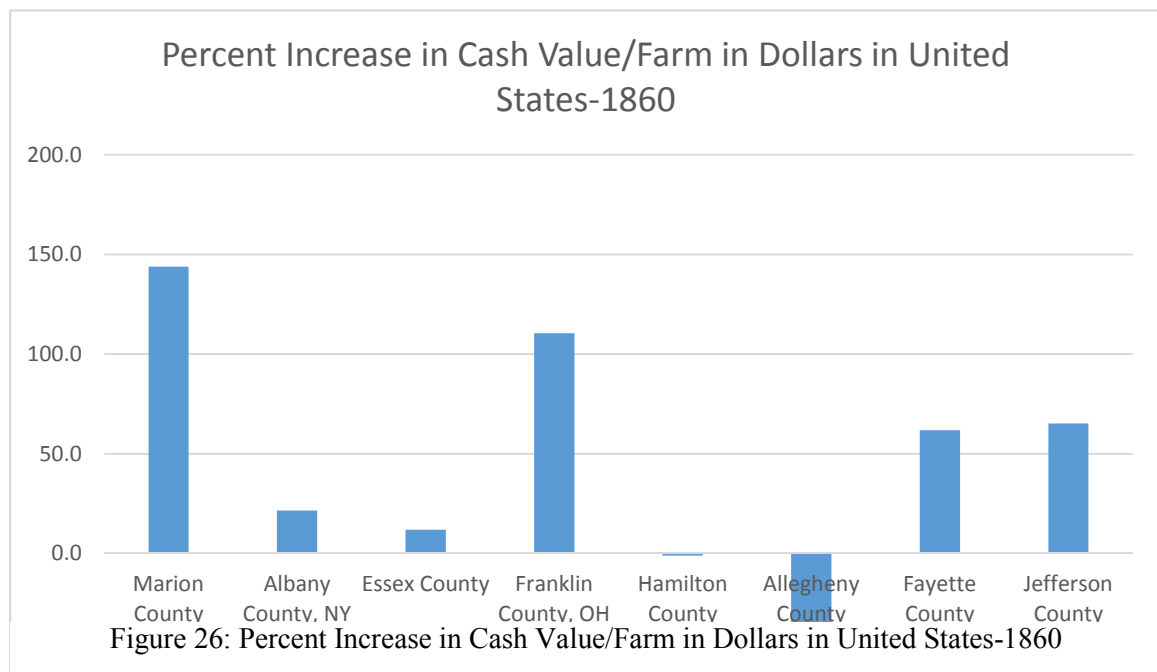


Figure 26: Percent Increase in Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in United States-1860

There are also other major factors that show the significance of the railroad for Marion County. The increase in the value of farmland shows the massive jump in price provided by transportation access. By 1860, the value of all farmland in Marion County increased to \$48.20 per acre which made it the most valuable land in the state. Wayne County, still showing the power of water transportation systems came in second place at \$43.30/acre. Dearborn County came in a distant third at \$29.50/acre and Tippecanoe County came in fourth with land values at \$27.50. Tipton and Kosciusko counties, because of increased transportation access due to the arrival of railroads had improved land worth \$17.80 and \$19.40, respectively. The clear conclusion shows that the predominant transportation network was shifting toward rails and that the counties based on water transportation were beginning to lag behind. Marion County was a major beneficiary for this as the failure of the canal project allowed them to quickly adapt to the new rail technology without having to overturn an older infrastructure.

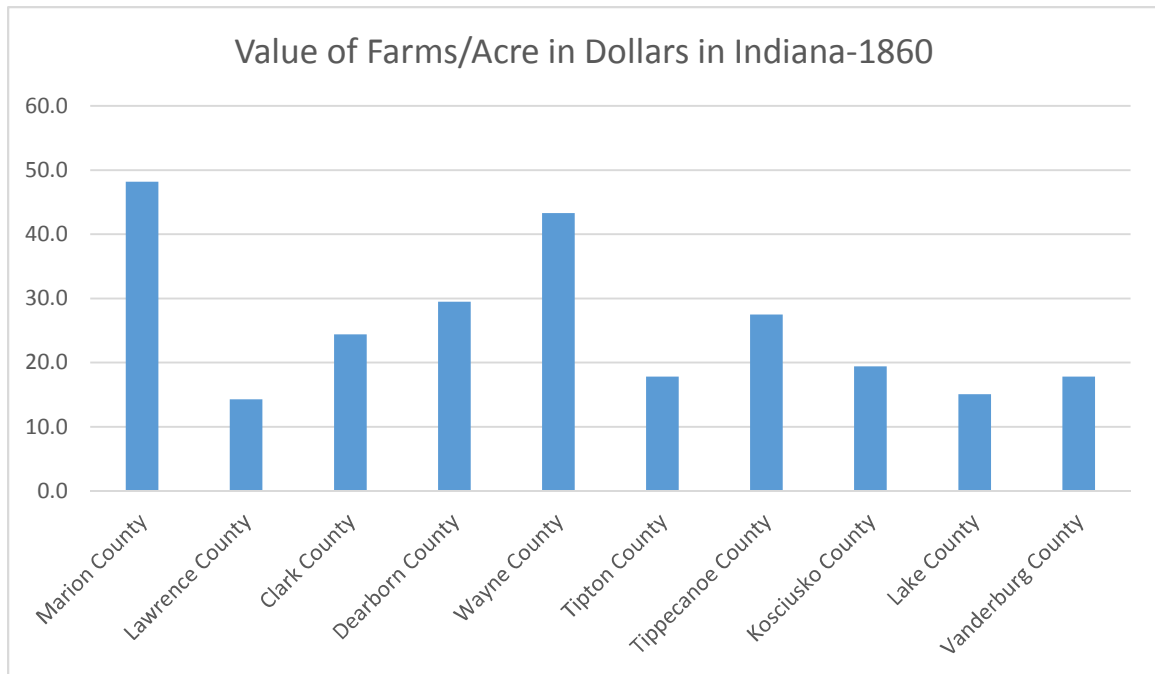


Figure 27: Value of Farms/Acre in Dollars in Indiana-1860

This trend was not mirrored everywhere in the Old Northwest. Franklin County remained relatively low to the rest of the regional counties studied by only have land values at \$45.60. Hamilton County, again, led the pack with land values at \$98.40. Fayette County followed at \$76.10 and Jefferson County came in at \$64.70. Allegheny County brought up the rear with land values at \$63/acre for Midwestern counties with major cities. The values of these counties is explained by the emergence of large cities during the early nineteenth century that helped boost land prices. Unlike Indiana, whose largest city was Madison until it was overtaken by Indianapolis in the 1850 census, Ohio, Kentucky and Pennsylvania all had major urban centers that kept the price of land quite high. Rural counties in those states would undoubtedly show land prices more on par with those of Indiana. A similar trend is seen in the Northeastern Counties examined here. Albany County land was worth \$49.70/acre in 1860 and Essex County land was

worth \$56.20 per acre. These high prices reflect that the established cities were very valuable to the pricing of agricultural land nearby.

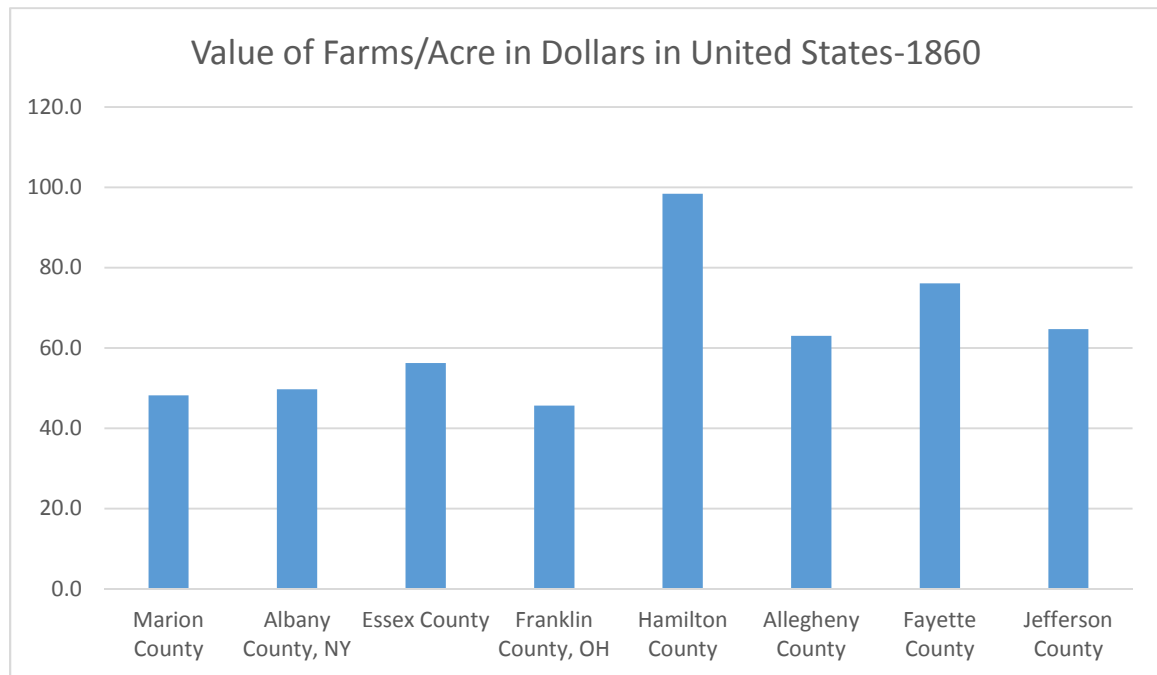


Figure 28: Value of Farms/Acre in Dollars in United States-1860

The value of overall land prices must be examined further, however, to uncover the better picture of lived experience. The cash value for each improved acre suggests that by 1860, Marion County was the central agricultural hub of the state and beginning to catch up with other regions of the country. The transportation revolution allowed central Indiana Hoosiers to obliterate space and time and helped bring the area more solidly into the economic network of the rest of the United States. In Marion County, improved acres were worth \$81.90 on average in 1860. This price emerged as rail access to the city made it a successful economic center and the existence of the political capital only increased the value of land in the region. Wayne County was in second place with land worth \$76.20 per acre because of its access to the National Road, the Whitewater

River and the excellent farmland of east-central Indiana but all other counties began to lag behind development of the Hoosier capital. Dearborn County improved land was worth \$53.80 per acre and Clark County improved land was only worth \$47.80 per acre, which showed the relative decline of the Ohio River as a trade route as railroads began to emerge. Tipton and Kosciusko County were worth \$47.70 and \$48.70 per acre respectively, which bracketed them around the river based Tippecanoe County, whose land was worth \$48.50 per care. Ultimately, the value of improved land prices per acre from 1850-1860 in Indiana show that the railroad was becoming far more significant for transportation than water routes. The state likely would have maintained more loyalty to canal projects had the Panic of 1837 not completely destroyed the ability of the state to foster a stronger network. But the absence of a sound, in-place system during the 1840s made the state to be a relative “free agent” when deciding which transportation technology to use.⁶³⁴ Hoosiers made the smart choice and began reaping the benefits of rail construction rather than pushing to complete the various canal projects planned during the 1830s.

⁶³⁴ As mentioned above, William Cronon mentions this possibility in *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 345-50.

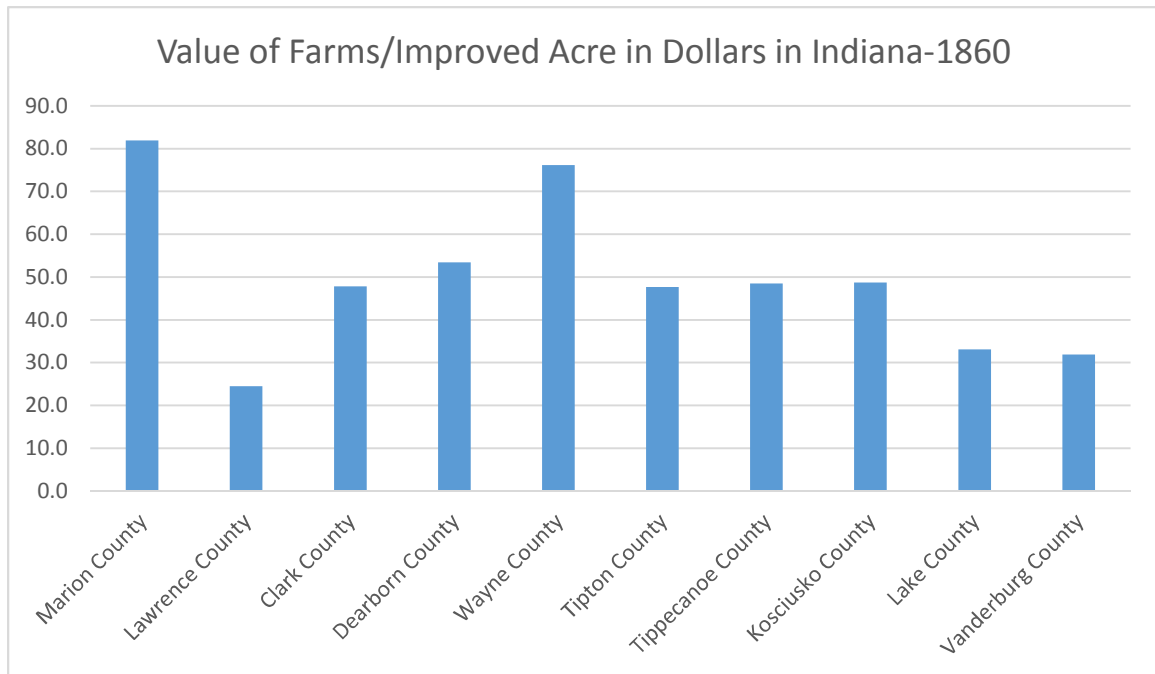


Figure 29: Value of Farms/Improved Acre in Dollars in Indiana-1860

Railroads, however, did not immediately make Marion County an economic dynamo. The economic inertia created in the Midwest still pulled money toward older, river based cities. Hamilton County improved acres showed that railroads did not immediately change the economic structure of the Midwest. Improved farm acres there were worth \$141.70 each. Allegheny County actually outpaced Hamilton County. Its improved acres were worth \$145.20 each and led the Midwestern counties studied. Jefferson County land was worth \$96.90 per acre and shows that the Ohio River still was still the dominant regional trade artery based on actively producing farm land instead of including unimproved farm land that made Marion County a contender when including all agricultural land. The Ohio River valley still had the most expensive farm land, but the railroad created a new landscape where Marion County began outpacing some older areas in terms of land price. Fayette County improved land was only worth \$76.80 per

acre and shows a significant moment when river and rail access to the Ohio River created land prices that were roughly the same.⁶³⁵ Marion County also surpassed northeastern counties. Albany County had improved land worth \$61.60 per acre and Essex County had improved land worth \$73.00 per acre which shows the relative decline of the Northeast as an agricultural hub and the rise of the Midwest, including Midwestern areas that were cut off from the rest of the nation's economy only ten years before. Franklin County, while still lagging behind the other regional counties studied here at \$68.30 was also gaining a lot of ground on older river based cities, but its complete canal network held it back from seeing the massive economic jumps emerging in Marion County. Overall, frontier counties like Marion and Franklin were beginning to see the benefits of modern transportation networks that would allow them the same easy access to a market as those seen by cities established on rivers. The transformation was not complete by 1860 but it was certainly underway as technology allowed humans to overcome environmental barriers to trade.

⁶³⁵ Obviously, access to the Ohio River is only one factor out of many that influence land prices. Indeed, Fayette County land was improved at a 99% rate which brought down the price of improved land based on the measurements used here, but the trend still holds. Water based cities were losing some of their economic hold on the Midwest as railroads challenged old economic patterns and arrangements and new settlers flowed into the region.

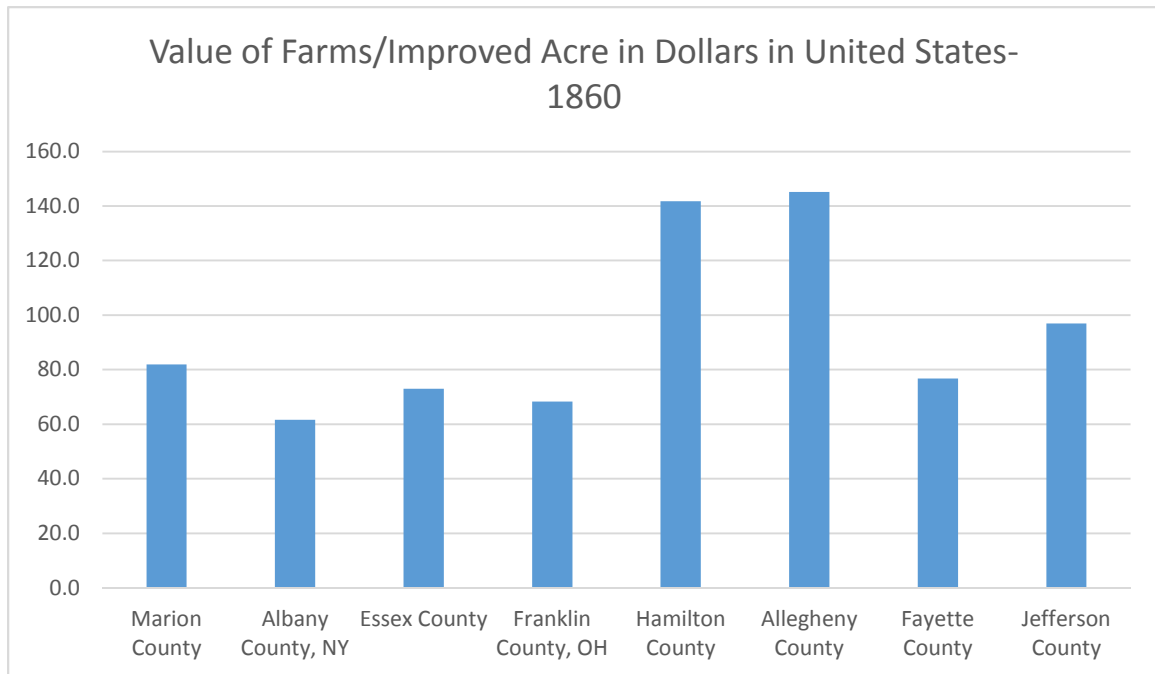


Figure 30: Value of Farms/Improved Acre in Dollars in United States-1860

Showing just how quickly Marion County was catching to the rest of the region's cities is seen by comparing the percentage of land value increases. Higher increases show a rush to an area while lower percentages suggest stability in a region. The changing transportation structure of the Midwest gave Marion County a massive increase in land values. The ten year increase in land value per acre was 166.2% in Marion County. Only Tipton County saw a larger increase as it shot up 196.6%. Kosciusko County and Lake County also saw large increases at 136.5% and 125.3%, respectively. These increases show the effect of rail access on the land values of a county. These rates show that areas without water access remained on the frontier a lot longer than areas where transportation technology allowed easier connections. None of the counties had water access to major cities in 1850 but the rise of railroads allowed land prices to reflect the increased market export potential. Counties with river access did not fare so well.

Wayne County maintained its relatively strong position among water-based counties by increasing its values by 91.5% and Tippecanoe County did well too by increasing 90.9%.

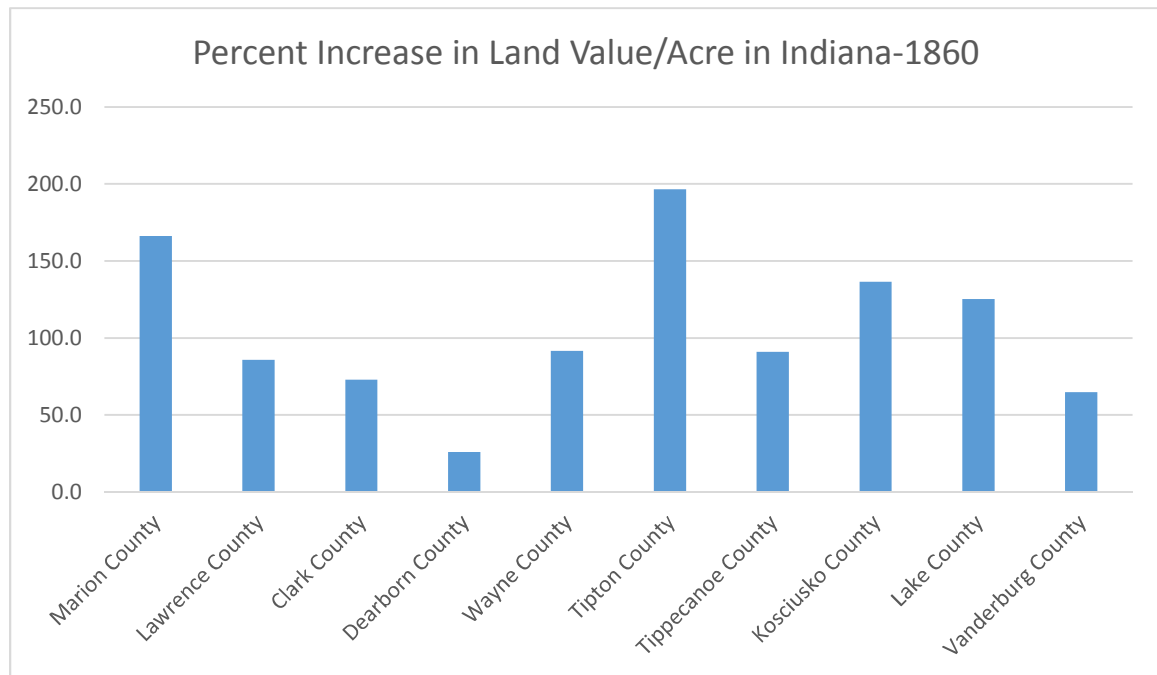


Figure 31: Percent Increase in Land Value/Acre in Indiana-1860

Cities on the Ohio River increased their land values significantly less. Dearborn County only increased its land values 26% which put it right in line with the increases seen in Hamilton and Allegheny County. Hamilton County land prices only increased 18% from 1850-1860 and Allegheny County prices only increased 34.9%. Louisville seemed to see a bit of a land boom during the decade as the prices of land in Jefferson County on the Kentucky side and Clark County on the Indiana side saw increases of 88% and 73%, respectively. However, the general trend is for counties on rivers to see land values increase at rates significantly lower than those in former frontier areas that lacked water access but obtained rail access before 1860. Fayette County only saw an increase of 61.9% which was dwarfed by Franklin County, which increased its land value by

87.6%. Northeastern counties also diminishing returns on their land prices. Albany County land prices increased at a modest 30.4% and Essex County prices increased only 21.3%.

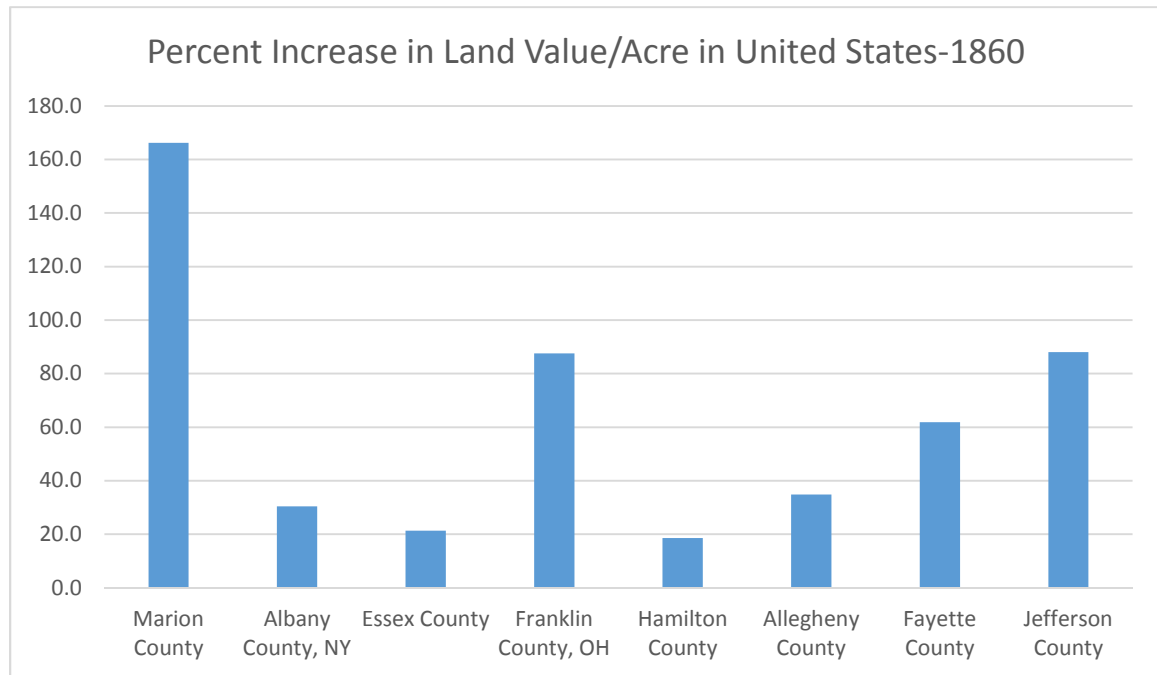


Figure 32: Percent Increase in Land Value/Acre in United States-1860

Land value increases per improved acre tell a similar story. Counties that obtained solid market access by 1860 saw huge increases in land values and shows that the frontier of American economic activity was quickly receding to the Far West. From 1850-1860, Marion County land prices increased 95.4% because of their increased access to markets. Lake County improved land increased 108.1% during the same period as Chicago emerged as a regional economic behemoth and Kosciusko County improved land values increased 75.8%.⁶³⁶ Other Indiana counties that were tied to rivers saw

⁶³⁶ Tipton County in northern Indiana only increased 23.8% per improved acre during the 1850s but that is due to the massive increase of 21.7% in improved land. In real numbers, the improved land increased from 10,588 acres to 42,431 for an increase of just over 400%. The large swing in improved acres suggests

significantly less growth. Wayne County maintained a healthy rate of growth at 76.7% but was abnormal.⁶³⁷ More representative counties included Tippecanoe County, which increased 26.1%, or Clark County, which increased 27%. Dearborn County continued to struggle with its overwhelming ties to Cincinnati. It only improved its land values 9% from 1850-1860.

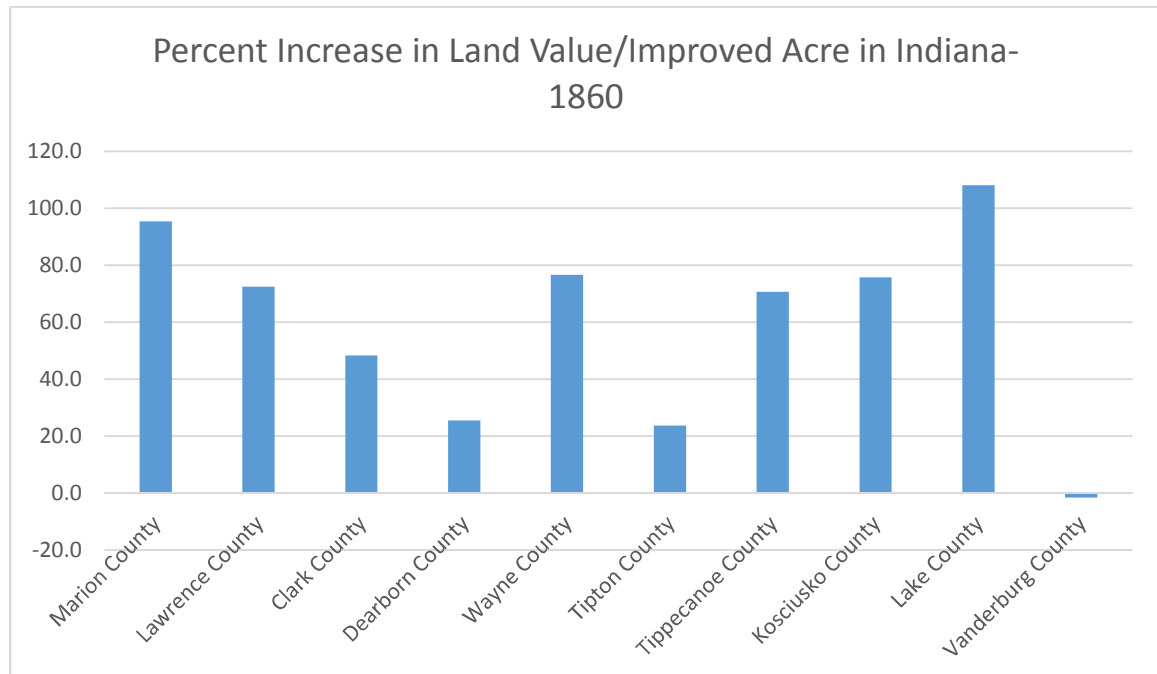


Figure 33: Percent Increase in Land Value/Improved Acre in Indiana-1860

Regional counties also show the lower rates of increase for improved acres. Hamilton County, as the leading economic center of the West, was the most stable economic region and increased its improved land values by just 11.7%. Other areas saw relatively large changes in their land values. Allegheny County increased its improved acre land value by 91.1%. The completion of the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1852 that

that the land was just beginning to be productive and is an outlier rather than evidence to contradict the large amount of evidence presented in the rest of this analysis.

⁶³⁷ As stated before, the national combination of the National Road, fertile land, and the Whitewater River continued to make Wayne County an attractive investment area for investors until the 1870s census.

connected Pittsburgh to Philadelphia made it a very solid investment for anyone who held land in the region and gave Allegheny County the highest increase in improved acre land value of any of the regional urban centers outside of Marion County examined in this study.⁶³⁸ Jefferson County saw growth of 63.1% during the decade which put it near the 66.5% increase seen in Franklin County. Again, these two counties show the relatively quick emergence of the railroad on land prices. Franklin County, although not matching the land value per improved acre, its value was increasing at a slightly higher rate again showing that railroads were having an increasing effect on the frontier nature of land-locked regions in the Midwest.⁶³⁹ Albany and Essex counties also suggest that land prices were stabilizing in the Northeast. Increases in land values per improved acre only increased 24.1% and 14.9%, respectively. Overall, the numbers examining the increase in improved acres of farm land suggest that the railroad was opening up a frontier to lands that were previously unable to produce goods for a market economy because of a lack of transportation infrastructure. However, the massive expansion of the railroad in the Midwest during the 1850s allowed previously less usable land to become very attractive to potential settlers.

⁶³⁸ George Rogers Taylor briefly mentions the Pennsylvania Railroad. See George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1951), 85, 90. See also, William B. Sipes, *The Pennsylvania Railroad: Its Origin, Construction, Condition and Connections* (Philadelphia: The Passenger Department, 1875); Robert McGonigal, *Heart of the Pennsylvania Railroad: The Main Line, Philadelphia to Pittsburgh* (Waukesha: Kalmbach Publishing, 1996).

⁶³⁹ Fayette County saw a 17.4% decrease in its value of each improved acre, but, like Tipton County's rate of improved acreage value increase it is more due to drastic changes in the amount of improved land. Fayette County increased its amount of improved land from 102,879 acres in 1850 to 174,866 acres in 1860. This massive jump gave them a 99% improved land acreage rate and makes them a severe outlier when examining the overall trends of land values in the urban Midwest. Further research needs to be done to uncover to causes of this drastic change.

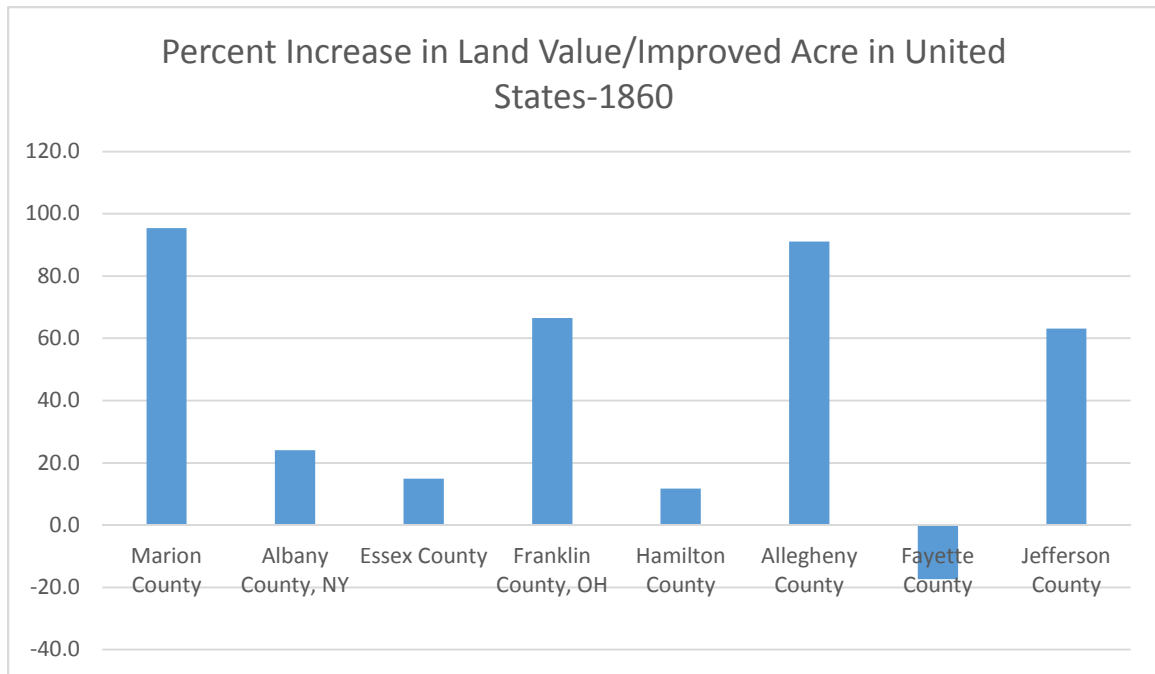


Figure 34: Percent Increase in Land Value/Improved Acre in United States-1860

The railroad opened the Midwest long before it opened the West to settlement and market participation. Perhaps the most telling statistic showing the frontier nature of landlocked areas in the Midwest is the relationship between the number of farms and the overall average size of those farms. The number of farms increased in Marion County as a response to rail access. In 1850, there were only 1,581 farms in the county which was good enough for second place behind Wayne County, which had 1,934. By 1860, there were 2,046 farms in the region which put it in first place in the state.⁶⁴⁰ The increase in total number of farms shows the increased value that the railroad gave to prospective residents. The 29.4% increase was unmatched by any county with water access in 1850.

⁶⁴⁰ Marion County had more residents in 1860 but also had a significantly larger urban population that did not own farms. In 1850, both counties had roughly 25,000 residents. By 1860, Marion County had an extra 10,000 residents, but the city of Indianapolis also grew by 10,000 people. Certainly there were some residents of the city who owned farms, but it seems that people were starting more farms in Marion County relative to rural population than in Wayne County.

Only Tipton and Lake Counties were able to best the rate of increase seen in Marion County.⁶⁴¹ Most counties with water access in 1850 saw very stable numbers of farms by 1860. Clark County saw zero change, having 1,381 farms in both 1850 and 1860 and Wayne County only had 53 more farms 10 years later. The only other counties that showed a significant increase were those near established cities. Tippecanoe County increased from 1,377 farms in 1850 to 1,717 in 1860 and Dearborn County increased from 1,520 to 1,858.

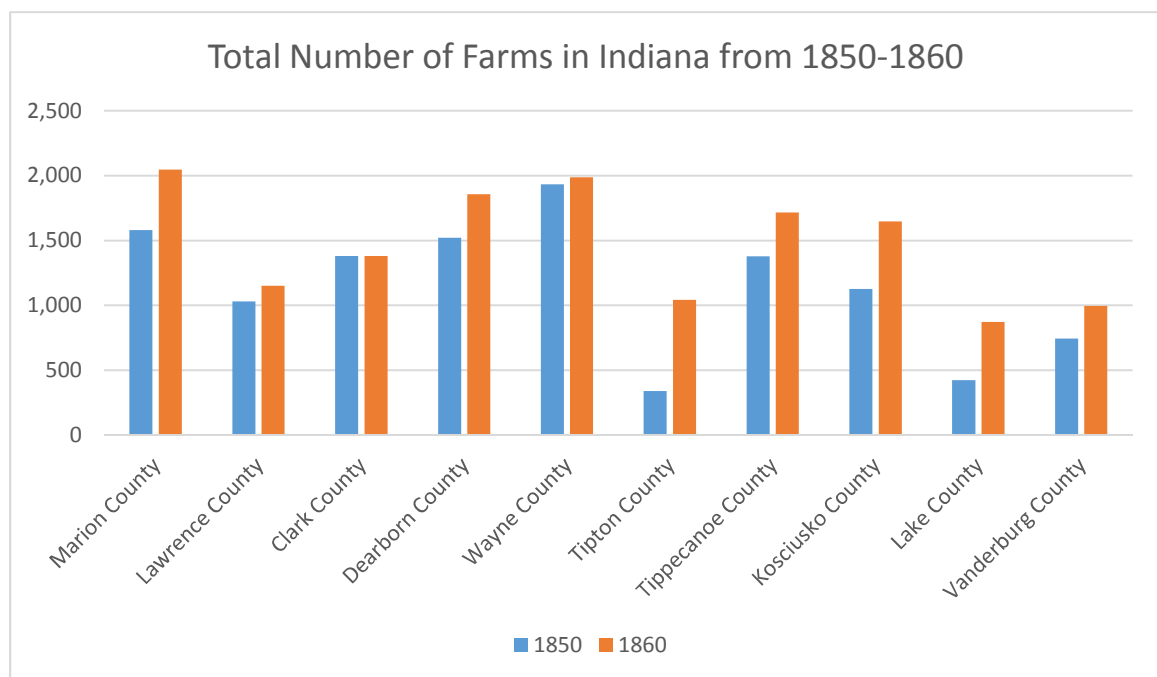


Figure 35: Total Number of Farms in Indiana from 1850-1860

⁶⁴¹ These increases are due to the extremely low number of farms in 1850. Tipton County increased from 339 in 1850 to 1,042 in 1860 for an increase of 207.3%. Lake County went from 423 farms in 1850 to 871 in 1860 for a 105.9% increase.

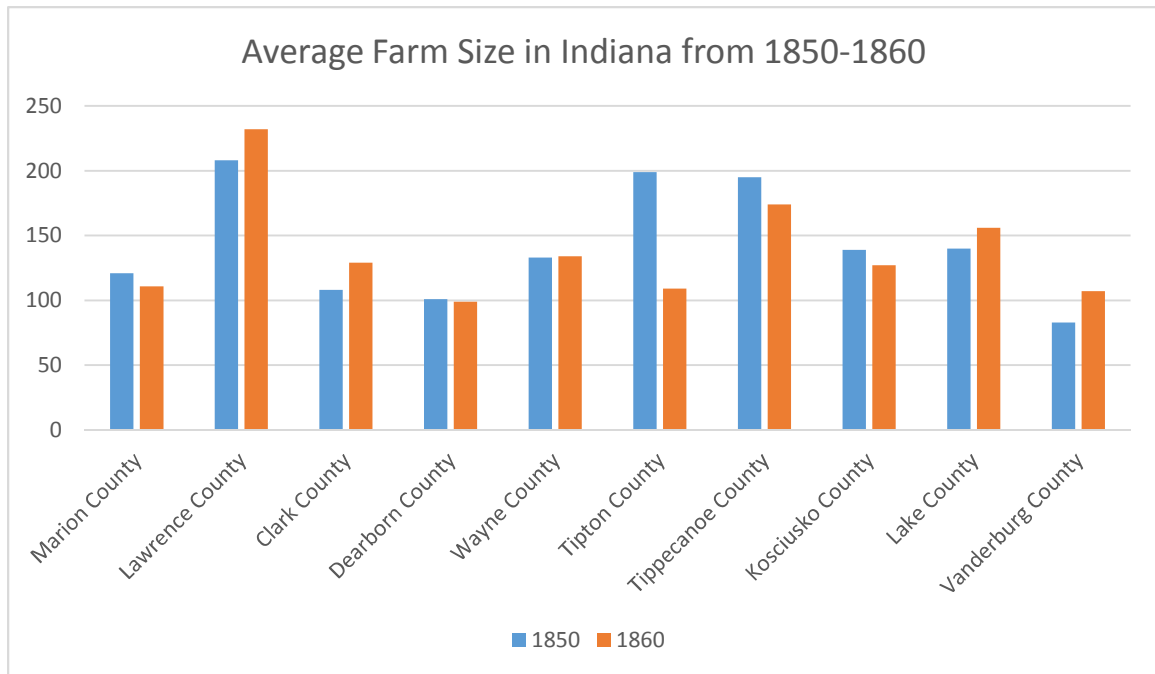


Figure 36: Average Farm Size in Indiana from 1850-1860

The increase in the number of farms was not always caused by increased access to transportation. As noted by many historians discussing agricultural trends in the Northeast, families attempted to create long term family security by providing their children with a parcel of land.⁶⁴² In the other urban centers in the Midwest examined here, overall farm numbers increased but average farm size decreased, suggesting that family farms were beginning to experience a similar dilemma seen in northeastern communities during previous generations. From 1850-1860, every long-settled Midwestern county with an urban center included in this study shows that the number of

⁶⁴² There is a sizeable historiography on the topic of family land use patterns. One solid summary is seen in Hal Barron, "Listening to the Silent Majority: Change and Continuity in the Nineteenth-Century Rural North," in Lou Ferleger, *Agriculture and National Development: Views on the Nineteenth Century* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 3-23; James Henretta, "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America" in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35 (1978): pp. 3-32; and Richard Easterlin, "Population Change and Farm Settlement in the Northern United States" in *The Journal of Economic History* 36 (1976): 45-75.

farms increased but that the average farm size decreased or remained the same.⁶⁴³

Hamilton County saw an increase from 2,602 farms in 1850 to 3,520 in 1860, but farm size averages fell from 81 to 63 acres. The number of Allegheny County farms increased from 1,902 to 4,535 but dropped from 202 to 88 acres. Jefferson County farms grew from 877 to 1,096 but average acreages fell from 176 to 156. Fayette County showed a surprising trend. The number of farms actually *decreased* from 799 to 691 but was the only county to maintain a stable 255 acres/farm.⁶⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly, northeastern counties began smaller and ended smaller during this period. Albany County fell from 102 acres to 95 acres on an average farm. Essex County fell from 73 to 52 acres. Marion County fell from 121 acres to 111 acres which suggests that the city was reaching a point where its development pattern matched some of the other urban centers of region and nation.

⁶⁴³ Columbus is not included in the “long-settled” county category. It was created by the state legislature in 1812 to be the capital of Ohio and no permanent European settlers lived in the region until then. See Ed Lentz, *Columbus: The Making of a City* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003).

⁶⁴⁴ Further research is needed to ascertain the reason for this trend. The extreme property values of the county may account for its unique development. The pattern of farm consolidation mirrors that of the 20th century and stands out among the other cities studied.

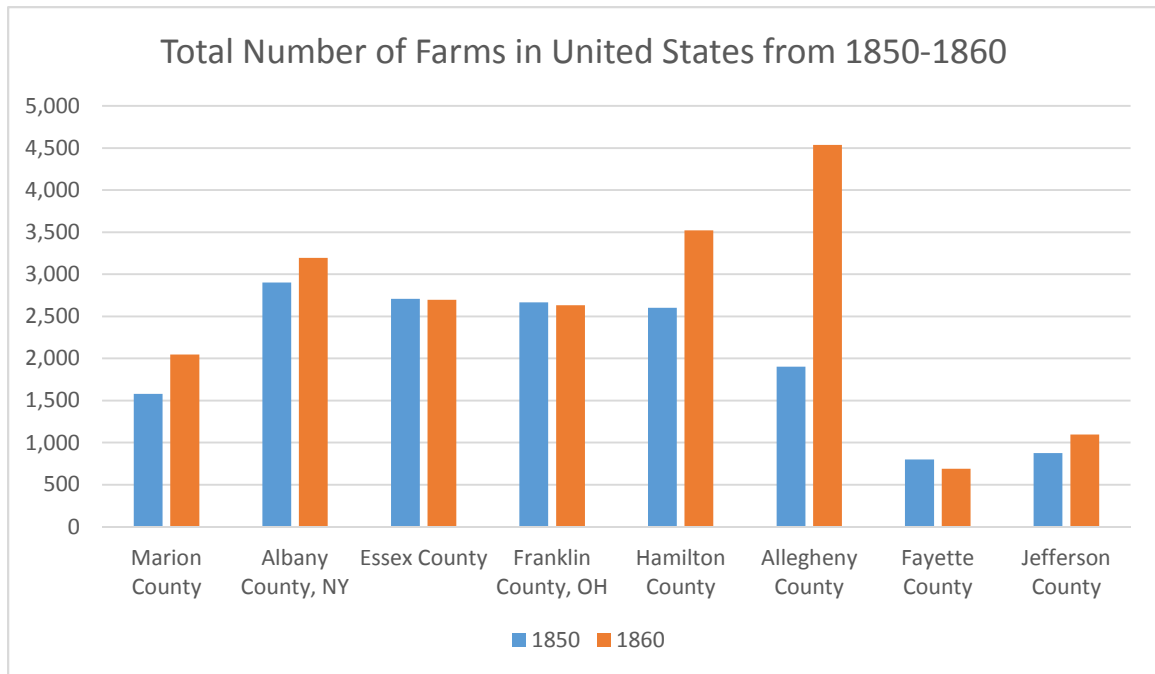


Figure 37: Total Number of Farms in United States from 1850-1860

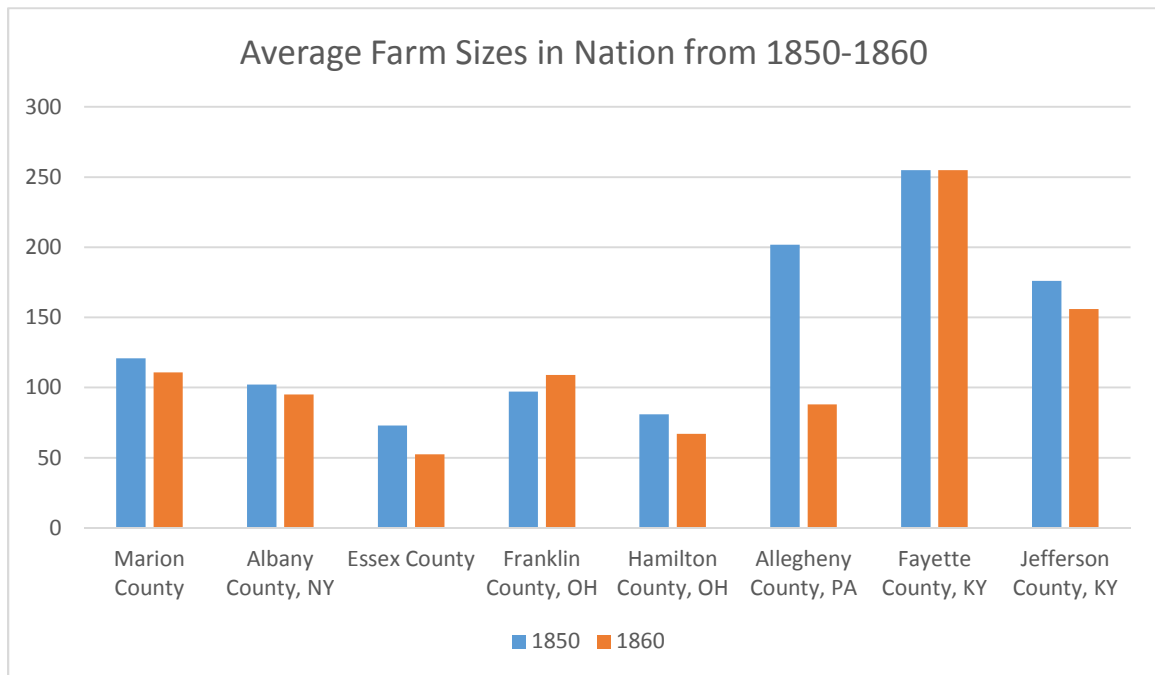


Figure 38: Average Farm Sizes in Nation from 1850-1860

The ultimate conclusion of the 1860 census shows that places like Marion County, secluded from market access until the arrival of the railroad, experienced a lag in their development. They existed on the frontier of American society because transportation technology was not able to overcome the environmental barriers present. Only the revolutionary technology of the railroad allowed cities like these to prosper. Non-water based counties like Marion, Tipton and Kosciusko saw telescoped economic development as railroads opened them to outside market systems much more quickly than counties tied to water transportation. Large relative increases in land value, percent of improved acreage, total number of farms, and cash values per farm all show that the railroad was altering the landscape of the Old Northwest and reorienting it toward the East instead of the South. Goods that once travelled down the Wabash, Ohio and Mississippi Rivers toward New Orleans now could be shipped to Chicago or Pittsburgh on their way to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York or Boston more quickly and cheaply than ever before and gave added incentive to begin large scale cash-cropping that emerged in the Midwest during the 1850s.

APPENDIX C. SELECTED AGRICULTURAL CENSUS DATA, 1860-1870

Census analysis shows that, by 1870, agricultural changes in Marion County were regionally stable compared to the 1860 census. In only twenty years, the region transformed from a relatively secluded political center to the leader of a state-wide network and equal economic player in the region. The 61.2% rate of improved land in Marion County in 1870 is very near the improved land rates in other counties in the state. Dearborn County was 61.8% improved and Vanderburgh County was 61.6%, suggesting a near equilibrium between longer-settled, river-oriented counties and the central part of the state. Wayne County and Lake County were improved 65.2% and 64.8, further suggesting that regions away from the Ohio River surpassed the southern portion of the state in agricultural importance by the 1870s.⁶⁴⁵ The outliers, Tippecanoe and Kosciusko counties, were 73% and 46.2%, respectively, but were far outside the norm for the examined counties. Most of the state was improved at a rate that would increase in the following decades but in proportion to the 1870 level.

⁶⁴⁵ For a brief discussion of northward population movement and clearing of farmland, see Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era: 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1995), 362-366.

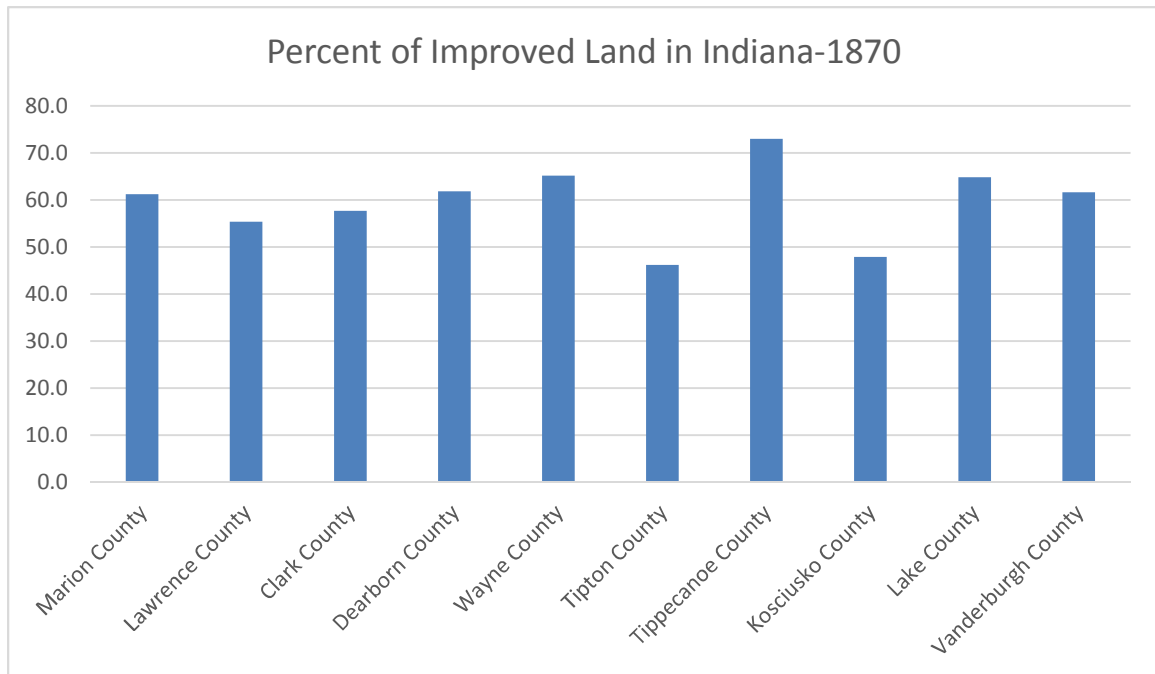


Figure 39: Percent of Improved Land in Indiana-1870

The increasing stability is better examined by looking at the rate of change in improved land in Indiana counties. Marion County increased its rate of improved land by 3.5% from 1860 to 1870. This stability was seen in many other regions of the state and suggests that the transportation revolution was basically complete by 1870. Clark, Vanderburgh, and Dearborn counties increased their rates of improved land by 6.6%, 5.6% and 5.3%, respectively. Wayne, Tipton, and Kosciusko counties increased by 8.4%, 8.8%, and 8.1%, respectively. The only county to lose value was Lawrence County, whose percent of improved land decreased 3.2%.⁶⁴⁶ There were only two counties that showed marked improvement from 1860 to 1870. Lake County increased

⁶⁴⁶ The decrease in improved land was probably due to farmers allowing the land to go fallow. Farmers in southern Indiana were more hesitant to adapt to scientific agriculture than their northern counterparts. Improved crops and breeds emerged in places like Lawrence County later than they did in Marion. See William Latta, *Outline History of Indiana Agriculture* (Lafayette: Lafayette Printing Company, 1938), 349-370; see also, Richard Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 77-127.

its rate of improved land by 19.3% and Tippecanoe County increased by 16.4%. These two counties affected by the rise of Chicago and an expanding steel industry were abnormal in their rates of increase. Discounting the three outliers, the rest of the state saw rates of increase between 3.3% and 8.8% which that the Indiana frontier was basically eradicated by 1870.⁶⁴⁷

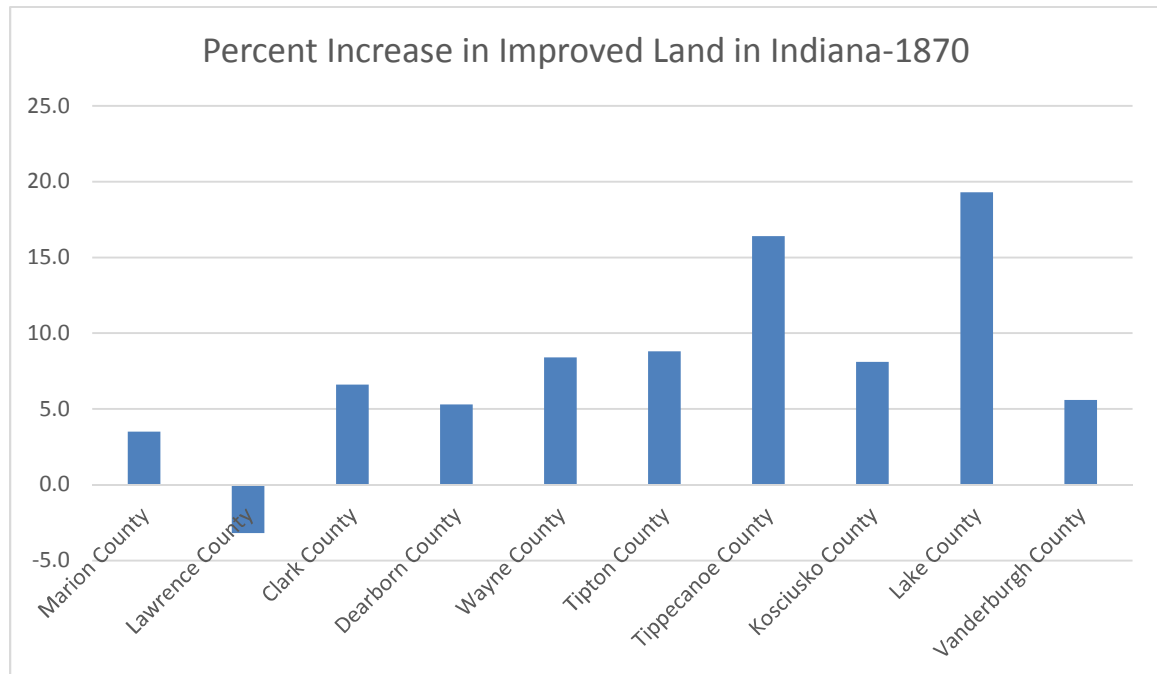


Figure 40: Percent Increase in Improved Land in Indiana-1870

The experience of Indiana is mirrored by the rest of the region. As the 1870 census shows, Marion County lagged behind other agricultural centers. Its 61.2% rate of improved land fell relatively far behind Hamilton at 78.9, Allegheny at 75.7%, Fayette at 77.3%, and Jefferson at 74.5%, counties. Even Franklin County was well ahead of

⁶⁴⁷ All counties examined saw a rate of increase in improved land between ten and fifteen percent in the 1880 census which suggests that the greatest stabilization of prices occurred during the decade of the 1870s. The increasing stabilization of land values in the 1870 census implies that the greatest change was probably completed relatively early in the following decade. More research on land values, especially during the Panic of 1873, would show how stable prices were in Indiana and the region.

Marion County at 73.9%. This, however, does not suggest that Marion County lagged behind other regional centers. By including the rate of increase in improved land, the 1870 census shows a definitive stabilization of improved land. The region marked a significant resemblance to the rest of Indiana. Marion County, at 3.5% increased the least, but Hamilton County, which improved by 9.5% improved the most. The rest of the regional counties increased somewhere in between and shows that the region, much like the state of Indiana were experiencing a distinct evening out of land use due to the rise of railroads. Comparing the Early West with the Northeastern counties examined shows another transformation of that historians have noted. Drastic decreases in rates of improved land show that comparative advantages and urbanization were forcing eastern counties to abandon agricultural land. Albany County saw a decrease in improved land of 1.3% and Essex County, probably because of increasing urbanization in the region, had a decrease of 6.8%. Overall, the changing rates of improved land, and their stabilization during the 1860s, shows that the transportation revolution was practically complete in the Early West. Marion County lagged behind the other major regional centers, but the rates of change in the succeeding decades suggest that those changes were proportional to the 1870 numbers. By 1870, the agricultural flexibility of the region was settled. The changes of the late nineteenth and through the twentieth century would be altered more by economic decisions rather than transportation barriers.

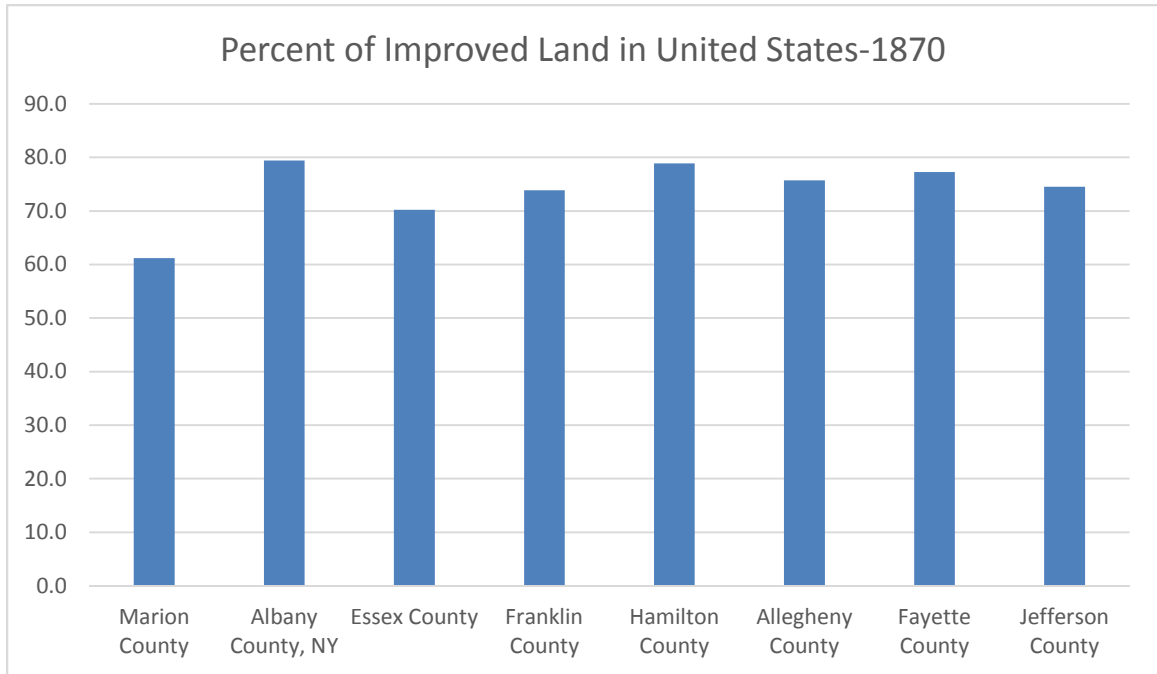


Figure 41: Percent of Improved Land in United States-1870

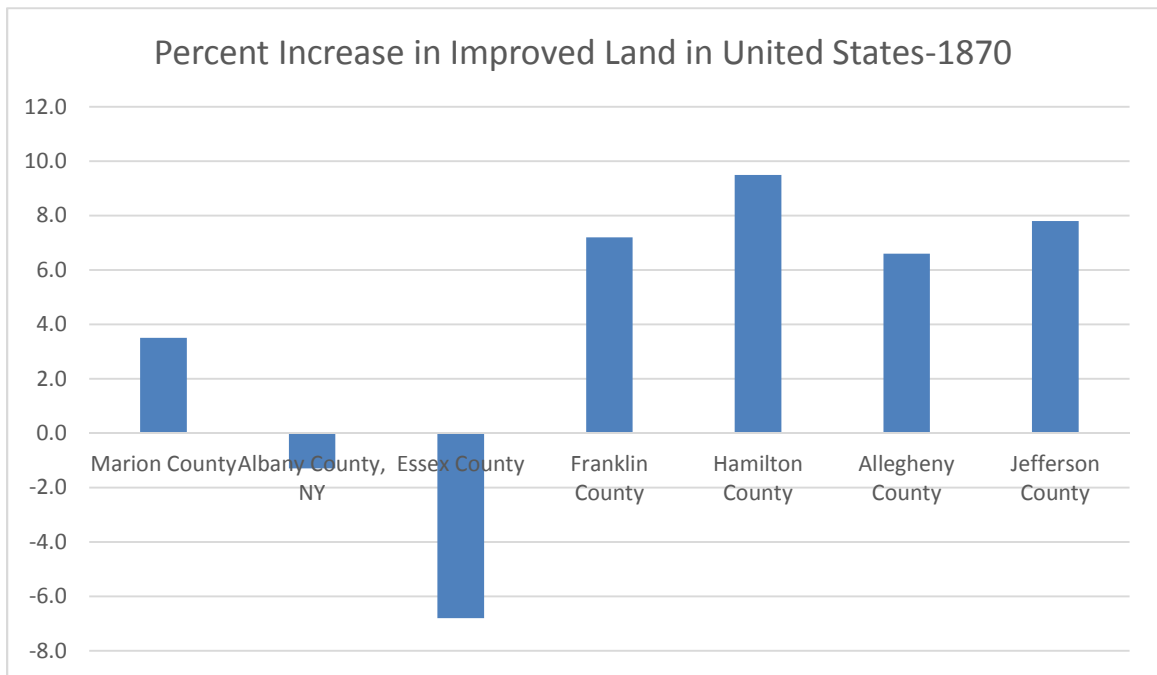


Figure 42: Percent Increase in Improved Land in United States-1870

Cash values per farm also show the success of Marion County farmers, as the average value was head and shoulders above any other county measured in the state. Marion County farms were worth an average of \$8,368 in 1870 while the next closest were in Wayne County with an average value of \$7,337. The agriculturally valuable—and infrastructurally connected—land of Wayne County was the only county to come within 25% of the value of Marion County farms. Tippecanoe County was the next highest at \$5,536, due to its access to the Wabash and Erie Canal, rail lines that connected it to Chicago, and the newly opened land grant Purdue University which opened in 1869. Other counties in Indiana fared much worse. Dearborn County, which was third in 1850, slipped to ninth out of ten with average farm values at \$ 3,373 and Lawrence County, which was fourth in 1850, was eighth in 1870 with an average value of \$3,898.

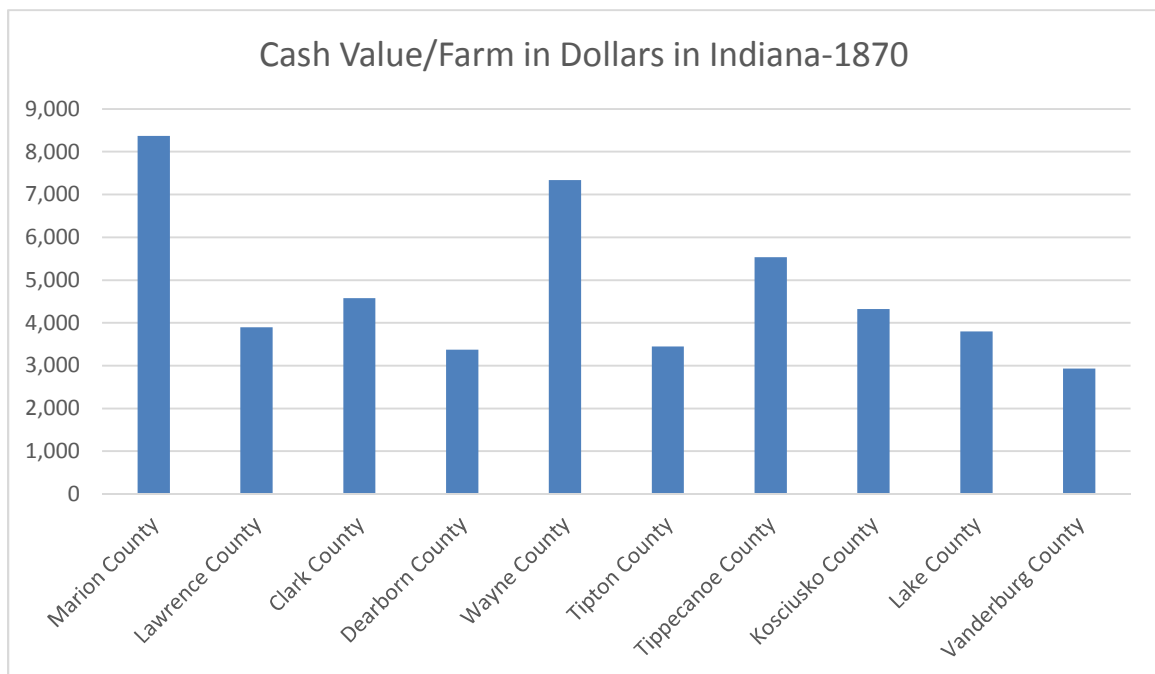


Figure 43: Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in Indiana-1870

The rates of increase for these farms also show the significance of railroads for increases in farm values. The greatest rates of increase were seen in counties that obtained rail access during the previous decade.⁶⁴⁸ Marion County land values increased at a rate of 56.7% from 1860-1870. That mark was only bested by three counties, all in northern Indiana. Tipton County led the way with an increase of 77.3%, while Kosciusko followed closely behind with a rate of 74.3%. These counties improved due to improving rail networks that more closely connected them to the rest of the national network instead of just Indianapolis. Lake County was the other with a higher rate of increase than Marion County with 60.9%. This is mostly attributed to the closeness of the county to the emerging metropolis of Chicago and the easy access to lake-based markets, improved implements as well as a railroad that connected the rest of Indiana to the future Windy City. The rest of the counties in the state did not fare so well. Vanderburgh and Clark Counties improved relatively well at 52.4% and 44.1%, respectively. But the increase in Vanderburgh County was caused by an abnormally low starting price for farms rather than large increases in farm value.⁶⁴⁹ Clark County was the only water-oriented region to have a strong rate of increase through 1870 and still lagged behind regions that relied on rail power. The next highest rate of increase was seen in Wayne County at 25.8%. The remainder showed an even worse picture of improvement. Lawrence County increased 16.6% and Dearborn increased 14.8% and ultimately show that counties dominated by

⁶⁴⁸ Clark County had an increase similar to some of the rail counties but was more of an outlier than something that would break the trend.

⁶⁴⁹ It was easier for Vanderburgh County farm prices to rise because they were a relatively paltry \$1,922 in 1860 and only increased to \$2,931 by 1870, significantly lower than the prices seen in other counties.

water-based transportation methods began experiencing a serious decline in importance.⁶⁵⁰

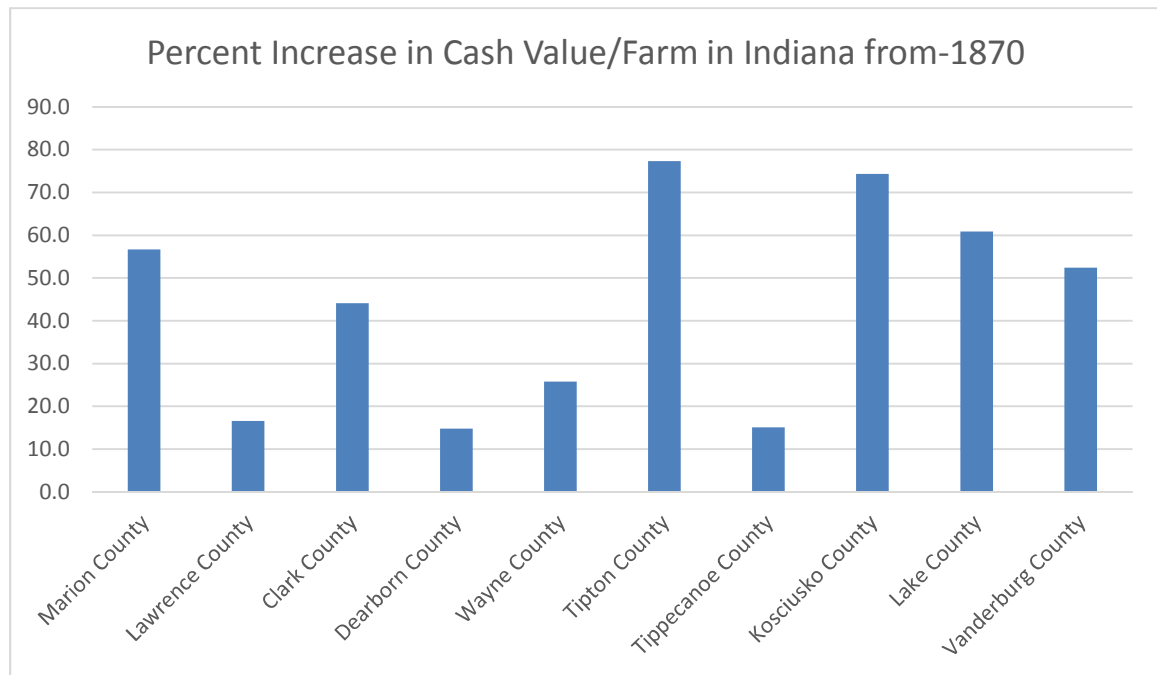


Figure 44: Percent Increase in Cash Value/Farm in Indiana from-1870

The 1870 census was also an important point for Marion County as a regional city because it caught up to the average farm price seen in Hamilton County, which had an average farm value only \$7 higher than in Marion County at \$8,375. The water-based transportation system of the Ohio River and the lack of a strong rail network in Cincinnati by 1870 allowed rural residents of Marion County to enjoy land values that rivaled the Queen City of the West. Marion County farms were worth roughly 80% of Hamilton County farms in 1860, but made up the ground by 1870. Jefferson County farms also saw a relative decline in the value of their farms compared to Marion County. In 1860, Marion County farms were worth slightly more than 50% of Jefferson County

⁶⁵⁰ Tippecanoe County, for reasons to be discussed later, increased 15.1%.

farms. By 1870, they were worth nearly 90% of Jefferson County farms, which were valued at \$9,443 on average. Marion County also increased its average value compared to Franklin County whose farms were worth \$7,037. The only county in the region that improved its relative position to Marion County, unsurprisingly, was Allegheny County which increased its average farm value to \$11,565 because of its placement as a hub on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Also unsurprisingly, Albany County lost more ground to Marion County as its farms were worth \$6,974 in 1870.

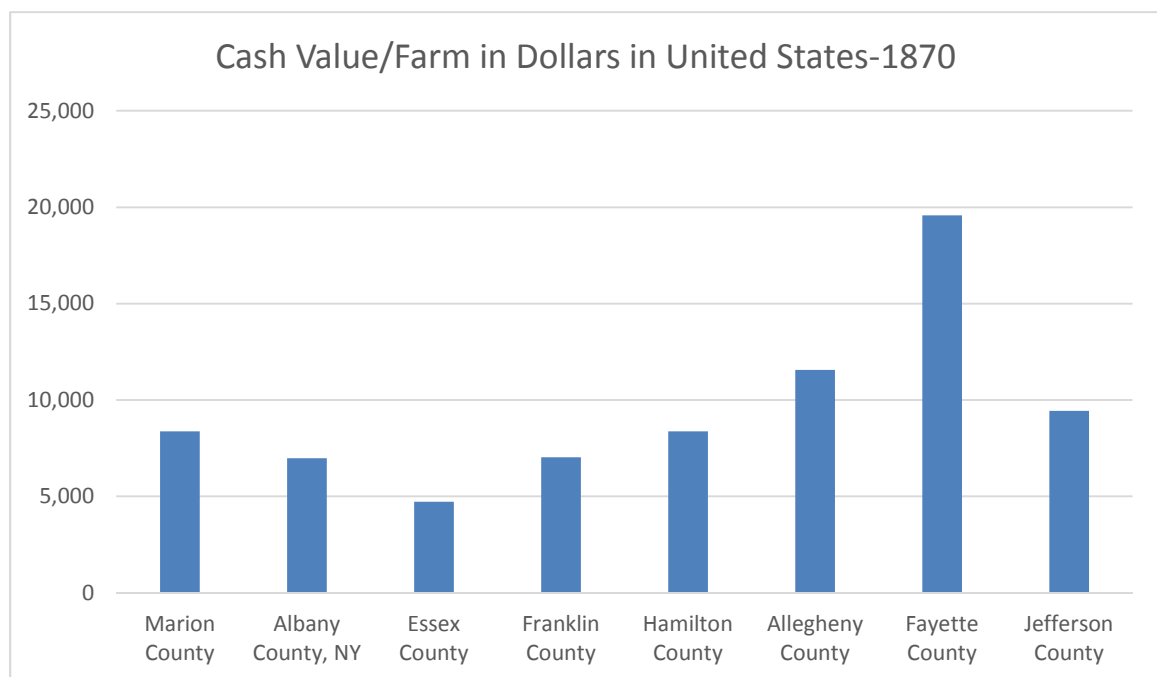


Figure 45: Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in United States-1870

Rates of increase for regional and national counties also show the significance of rail development in the nation. Allegheny County saw a massive 106.5% rate of increase for its average farms. The Pennsylvania Railroad, as a transition hub between East and West through the Appalachians, allowed farmers easy access to markets in multiple regions of the country, provided a nearly guaranteed market for sale which inflated land

values. Franklin County was the only other county examined in the Midwest to recognize significant growth, but it still lagged behind Marion County with average farm value increases of 41.2%. Hamilton County experienced a rate of increase of 26.3% as it remained an important meatpacking hub on the Ohio River. Farms near Kentucky urban centers fared significantly worse. Fayette County farm values only increased 0.7% by 1870 and Jefferson County farms *decreased* in value 7.1%. The story in the Northeast fared slightly differently, as Albany County farms, which grew in size by 2.1% during the 1860s, increased in value at a rate of 46.9% reflecting the increasing output caused by investments in improved breeds and fertilizer.⁶⁵¹ But Essex County farms, which increased in size by 14% during the preceding decade, only increased in value by 23%. In sum, the rates of increase of farms show that counties that acquired rail access during the 1860s were in an ideal position to benefit from added connections to market and the burgeoning industrial areas that finished American raw materials into construction goods. Indeed, percent increases in farm values show the relative success of areas that were not tied to water access in the early years of the nineteenth century.

⁶⁵¹ Paul Wallace Gates, "Agricultural Change in New York State, 1850-1890" *New York History*, 50 (1969): 115-141.

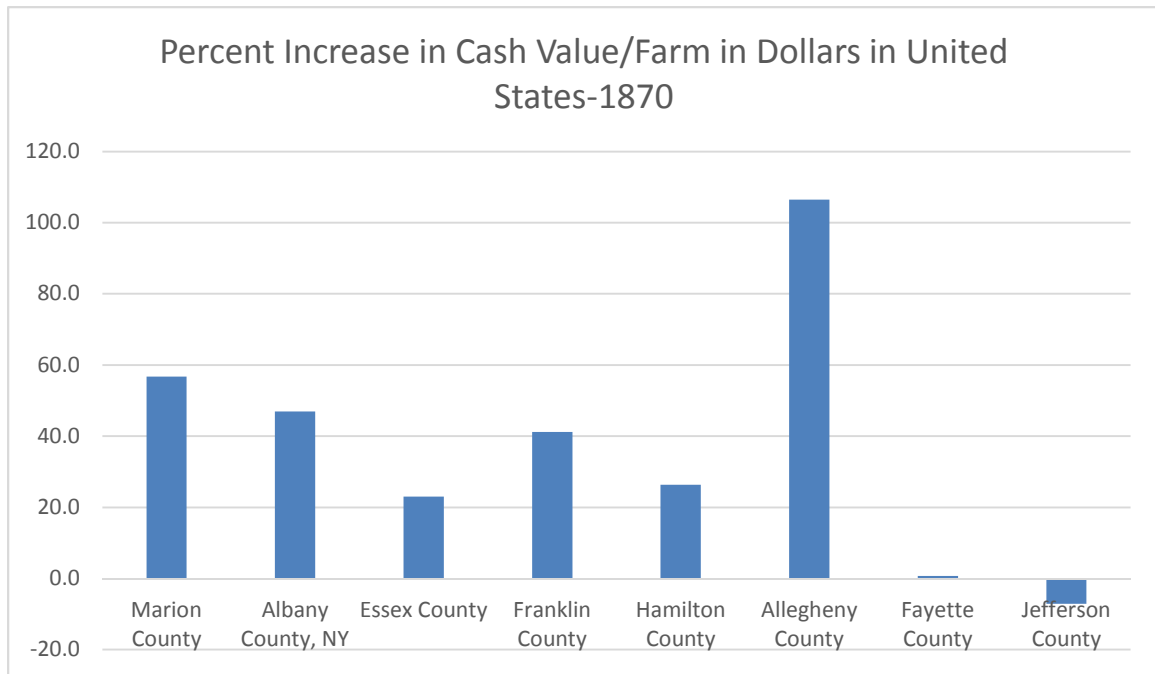


Figure 46: Percent Increase in Cash Value/Farm in Dollars in United States-1870

Farm values per acre show that by 1870, Marion County was well entrenched as the leader of the state's agricultural sector. The average value of an acre of agricultural land in Marion County in 1870 was \$85.40. This figure dwarfs the other counties examined in this study. Wayne County had the second highest value per acre at \$60 in 1870 but showed the limited development of the region. In 1860, average land values were relatively similar between Marion and Wayne County, but the creation of Marion County as the central rail hub of the state allowed its land values to rise disproportionately by 1870.⁶⁵² Other Indiana counties fared similarly to Wayne County. The next highest land values/acre were in Tippecanoe County at \$48. Vanderburgh, Clark and Dearborn counties, all on the Ohio River, were at \$39.10, \$37.90 and \$36 respectively. Kosciusko County land was worth \$38.50/acre, while Tipton County land was worth \$30.30.

⁶⁵² Average land values in Marion County and Wayne County in 1860 were \$48.20 and \$43.30, respectively.

Lawrence County, probably due to lack of fertilization and crop rotation, brought up the rear with land worth \$19.80. Overall, these numbers show that Marion County, with its access to railroads, an urban population and improved implements was able to increase its land value/acre to a range higher than any other county in the state.

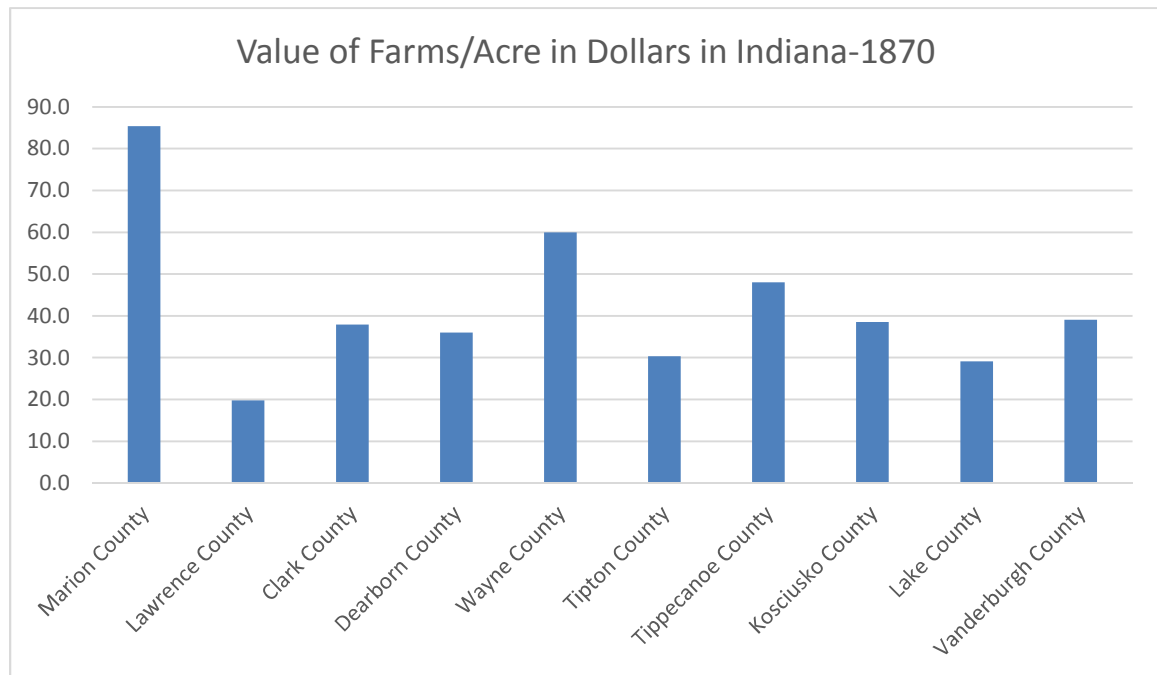


Figure 47: Value of Farms/Acre in Dollars in Indiana-1870

The variation in land values shows that Marion County was integrating itself into the regional economy as well. Hamilton County farmland was still worth more per acre, at \$138.50 and Allegheny County farm land was worth \$146.30, which was still higher than seen in the Hoosier capitol. However, Marion County land values of \$85.40/acre in 1870 pushed their land values higher than Franklin County, which was worth \$66.30, and just above Jefferson County, with land values of \$84.30/acre. Marion County farmers, by 1870, found that their land values were not dampened by the seclusion seen in the early years of settlement. The rail access afforded during the period from 1850-1870 finally

allowed residents of Central Indiana to obtain land prices that matches those of other regional districts without worrying about water access. Northeastern counties saw a bit of relief in their land values. Albany County land values increased to \$71.50/acre and Essex County values increased to \$64.30/acre. These land values were nearly as high, relatively, as they were in 1850, and shows that by 1870, land values in the eastern third of the United States were beginning to find equilibrium and that comparative advantage was settling in to the economic networks of rail connected regions.⁶⁵³

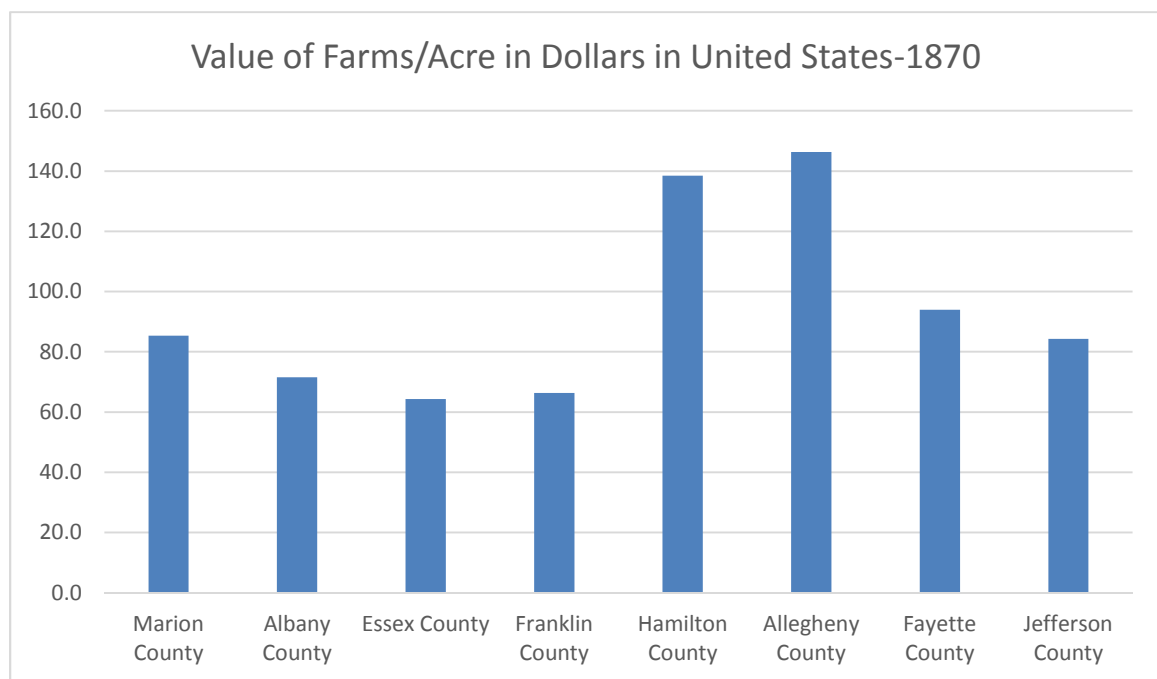


Figure 48: Value of Farms/Acre in Dollars in United States-1870

⁶⁵³ One early example using comparative advantage to explain changing agricultural patterns is seen in Percy Bidwell and James Falconer, *History of American Agriculture, 1620-1860* (New York: Peter Smith, 1941), 236-238. Another excellent example of the rise of comparative advantage in the Northeast is seen in the rise of dairying in the New England region. See Paul Gates, *The Farmers Age: Agriculture, 1815-1860* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1960), 232-236. Various other examples of this trend are seen in Martin Brueghel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 93-103; Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). For one discussion of how transportation improvements affected the economic and agricultural development of the United States, see Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, *A New Economic View of American History from Colonial Times to 1940* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 143-174.

The average improved acre in Marion County was worth \$139.60 which put it high above the next closest, Wayne County, which averaged \$92/acre. The rest of the counties examined in this study show a significantly lower value for improved acreage. The only other county with farm values per acre above \$70 was Kosciusko County, which were worth \$80.40/acre and show that the railroads of northern Indiana were becoming significantly more important than the river valleys in the southern portion of the state. Prices also suggest that railroads across the state had negated the economic advantage provided by rivers. Clark, Tipton, Tippecanoe, and Vanderburgh counties—all in different regions of the state—had average farm values/acre worth between \$63 and \$66 in 1870. Dearborn County was close behind at \$58.20/acre as closeness to Cincinnati markets decreased in importance to the overall economy. Lake and Lawrence counties brought the lowest average values per acre at \$44.90 and \$35.70, respectively. Lake counties low values were driven by the high rate of swamp land in the county. Low values in Lawrence County were driven by a lack of improvement and connection to the market. No real river flowed through the area and railroads were absent from the region until later in the century.

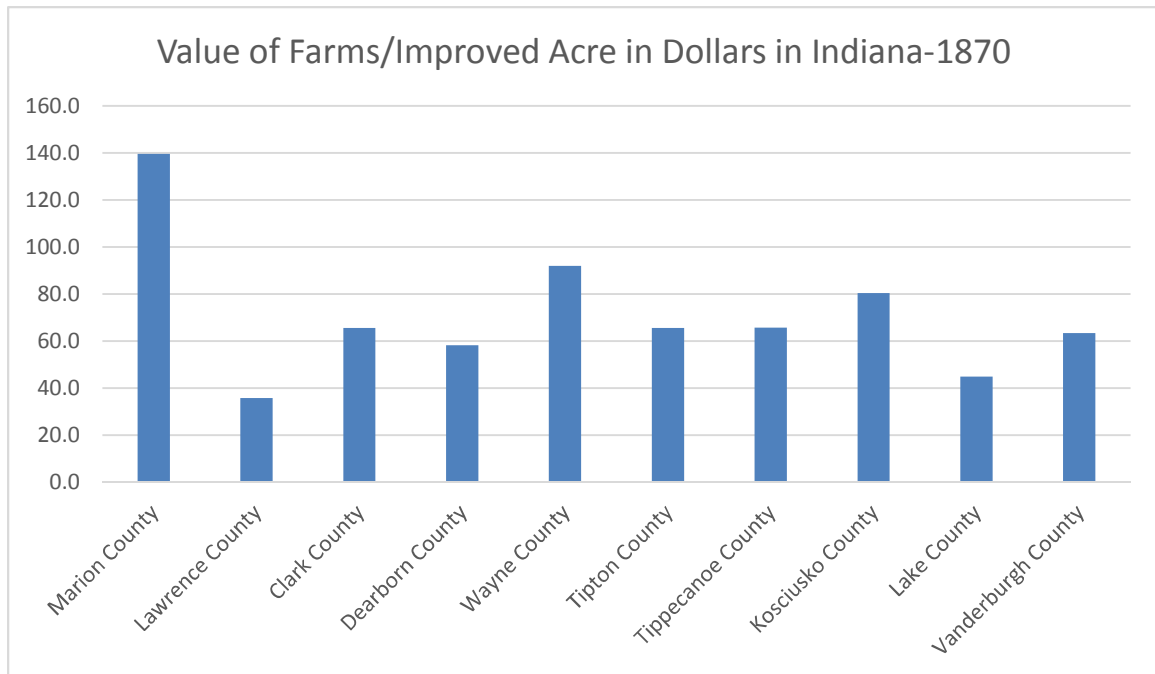


Figure 49: Value of Farms/Improved Acre in Dollars in Indiana-1870

Improved land values per acre also suggest that by 1870, Marion County was enmeshed in the regional economy as an increasingly equal partner. Marion County's \$139.60/acre price puts it in the range of the other counties in this study. Allegheny County, again because of its importance as a transportation route through the Appalachians and the booming steel industry, saw land prices of \$193.20/acre. Hamilton County farms were close behind at \$175.40/acre because of the economic power obtained in the early half of the nineteenth century as a manufacturing, meatpacking and agricultural hub. However, the Hoosier capital eclipsed both Fayette and Jefferson counties, which were worth \$121.60 and \$113.10 respectively. Franklin County because it was situated between Cincinnati, Cleveland and Pittsburgh, lagged far behind at \$89.60, showing the power of the environment and transportation technology to limit

growth as economic development occurred in the region.⁶⁵⁴ Instead of lagging behind in their economic development, the telescoping effect of the railroad fostered economic stabilization of the region so that the Midwestern “frontier” was effectively pushed west of the Mississippi river.

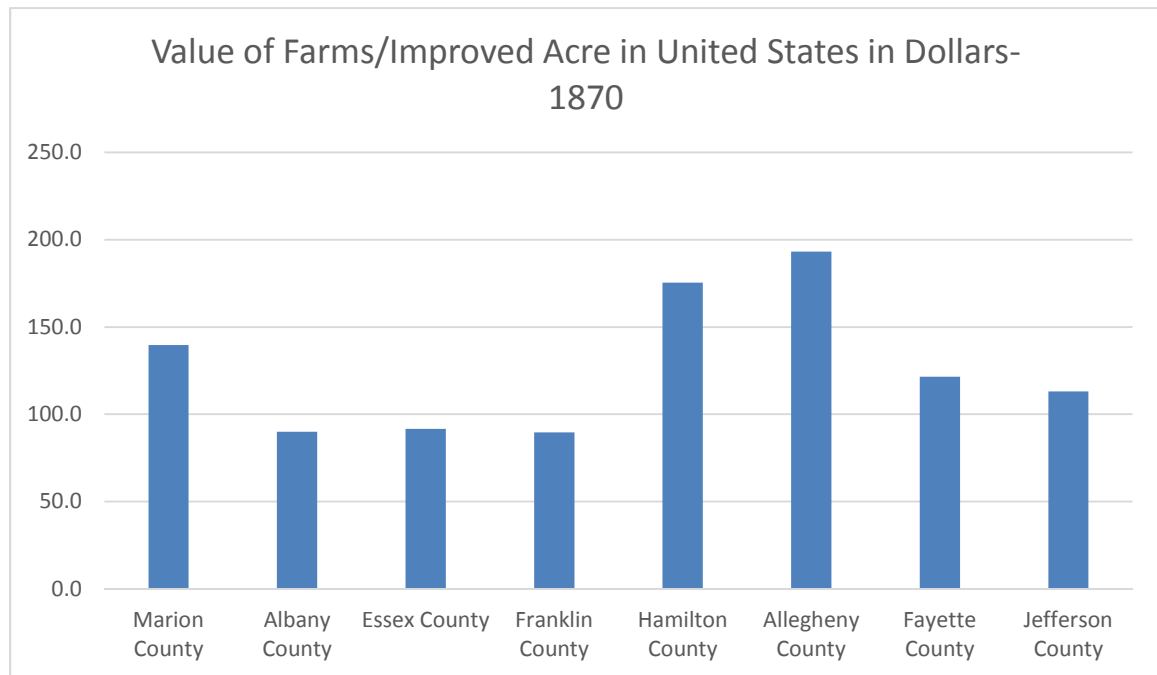


Figure 50: Value of Farms/Improved Acre in United States in Dollars-1870

The increase in average value per acre also shows the relative success obtained by Marion County agriculturalists. From 1860-1870, land values increased in Marion County increased by 77.1%. This increase, when coupled with the higher starting land prices show that Central Indiana was improving dramatically when compared to areas in the southern part of the state. Lawrence County land values increased by 38.4% during the 1860s and Dearborn County land only increased by a paltry 22%. The once powerful

⁶⁵⁴ Columbus could never establish itself as a transportation hub the same way that Indianapolis could because it had to compete with larger cities that surrounded it in much the same way that St. Louis and Chicago affected each other. See William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 295-309.

agricultural Wayne County only improved by 38.5%, showing that the agricultural land values in the eastern portion of the state—while still high—were beginning to level off more drastically than those reliant on rail access. Most of the counties that improved at a higher rate than Marion County were in the northern portion of the state. Tipton, Kosciusko and Lake Counties increased by 70.2%, 98.4% and 92.7%, respectively as their agricultural land continued to draw settlers and speculators for the newly available land. Tippecanoe County, was the only river based county to improve at a rate higher than Marion County, probably due to the proximity of railroads that led to Chicago markets and the rise of manufacturing in the county.⁶⁵⁵ Vanderburgh County also saw a dramatic increase in its rate of improvement but for the same reason that Tipton and Kosciusko counties improved so drastically during the 1850s. Land values were so small that any appreciable growth during the decade would make the county look like it was an economic behemoth. Unfortunately for Vanderburgh County residents, they lagged far behind the development of the rest of the state due to competition from the New Harmony settlement in neighboring Posey County into the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁵ Tippecanoe County invested \$2,512,211 in manufacturing materials which was, among the counties examined here, only second to Marion County.

⁶⁵⁶ For general background information about the development of Vanderburgh County and its major city, Evansville, see Joseph Peter Elliot, *A History of Evansville and Vanderburgh County, Indiana* (Evansville: Keller Printing Company, 1897). For a discussion of transportation in the region, see especially, 98-110.

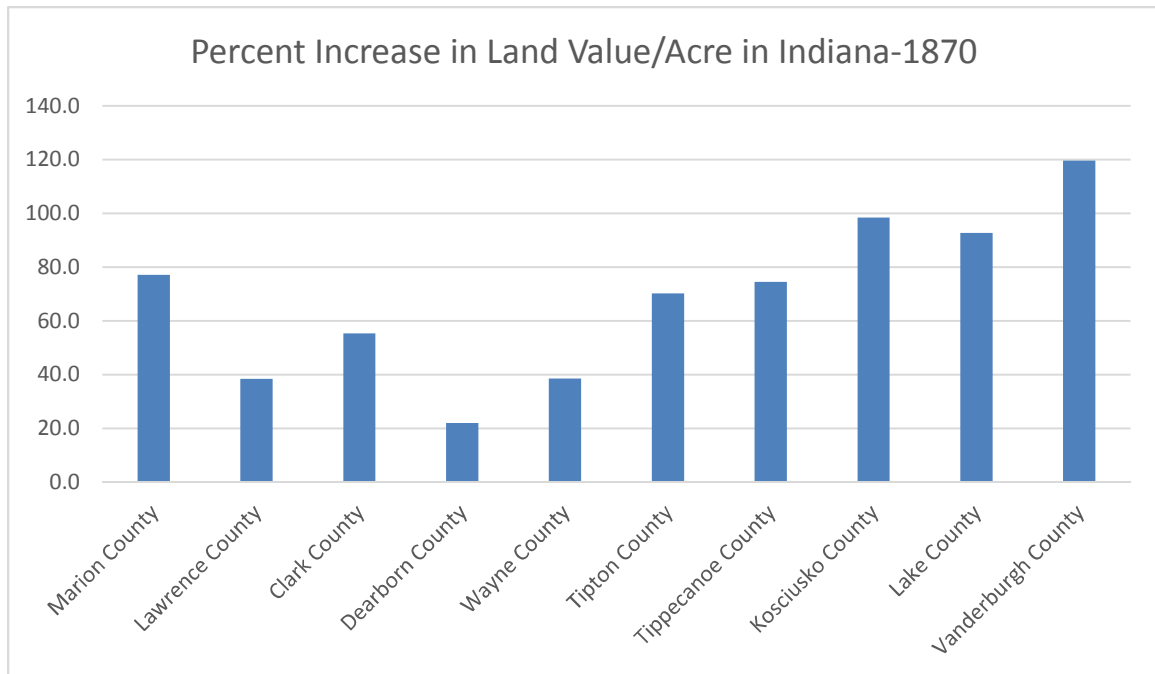


Figure 51: Percent Increase in Land Value/Acre in Indiana-1870

The percent increase in land values in the region lagged far behind those in Marion County. Allegheny County had the closest experience during the war decade, as land values increased by 56.9%. Franklin County saw the next highest rate of increase at 31.2% but was followed closely by Hamilton County, which increased by 28.9%. Jefferson County increased its land values by 23.2% and Fayette County increased by 19%. The similarity of the other regional urban centers and the low rates of increase demonstrate that their land values were extremely stable and that the volatility of western expansion and transportation change were levelling out. These counties were settled into the national economy as prices ceased to fluctuate separately from each other. Depressions would take their toll on land values, but they would do so for most regions at the same time. The region was binding itself together. Albany and Essex counties also suggest that railroads were beginning to bind the East and Early West to each other.

Similar to Hamilton and Franklin County, Albany County increased its land value by 30.4%. Essex County improved slightly less than the rest of the examined counties in this study during the 1860s but still managed an increase of 12.5%. Overall, the trends seen in the nation were beginning to show stability rather than volatility that suggests the significance of the railroad for bringing Marion County into a closer relationship with the rest of the nation.

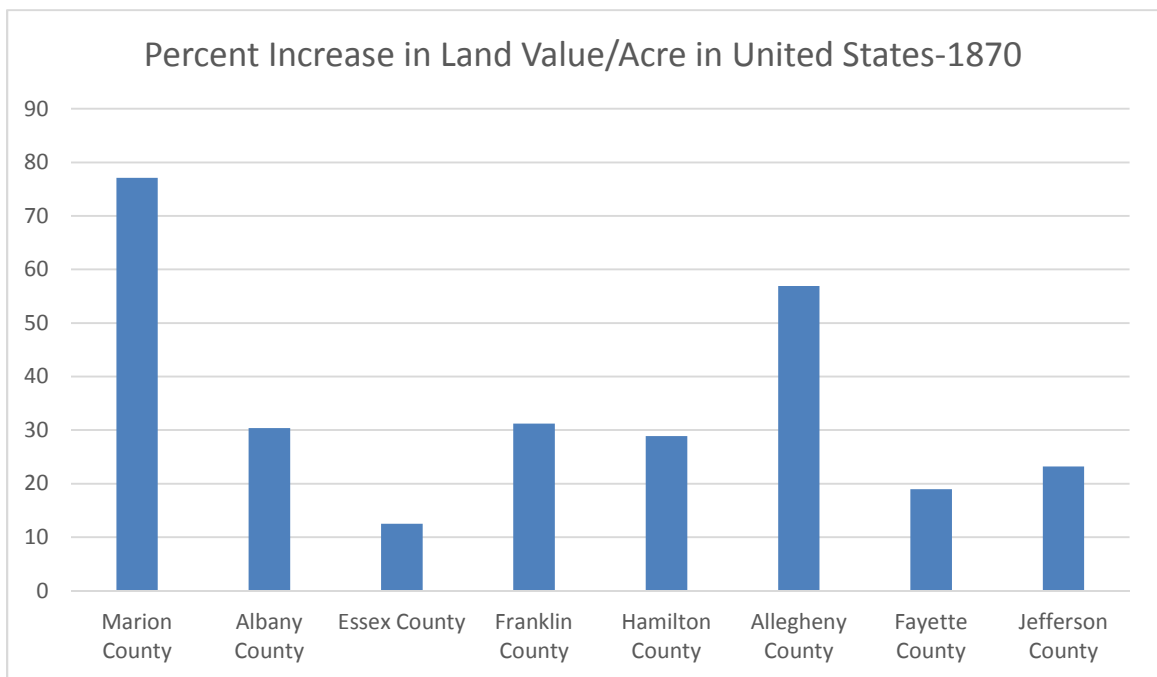


Figure 52: Percent Increase in Land Value/Acre in United States-1870

The percent increase in improved land values again reiterate the point that Marion County agriculture dominated the state by 1870. The cash value/improved acre was already the highest in the state in 1860 and the 41.3% increase from 1860-1870 separated it even further. The only county to increase its land values/improved acre faster was Vanderburgh County, which had a 49.6% increase. It and Lawrence County, which

lagged behind achieved their rates of increase based on low starting land values.⁶⁵⁷ Only Kosciusko County approached Marion County with a 39.4% rate of increase. The rest of the counties lagged far behind Marion. Lake County, as a production center for Chicago, only increased its land value by 26.2%. Tippecanoe County land only increased by 26.1% and Clark County improved acres increased by 27%. Even the agriculturally mighty Wayne County saw its increase improved land values rise by only 17.1%. The county faring worst, Dearborn, increased the value of its improved acres by a mere 9%. Overall, the increase in the price of improved acres by 1870 shows that Marion County separated itself from the rest of the state. Instead of lagging behind due to transportation issues, the state capital rocketed into a leading position of agriculture in the state because it was a major shipping and urban center.

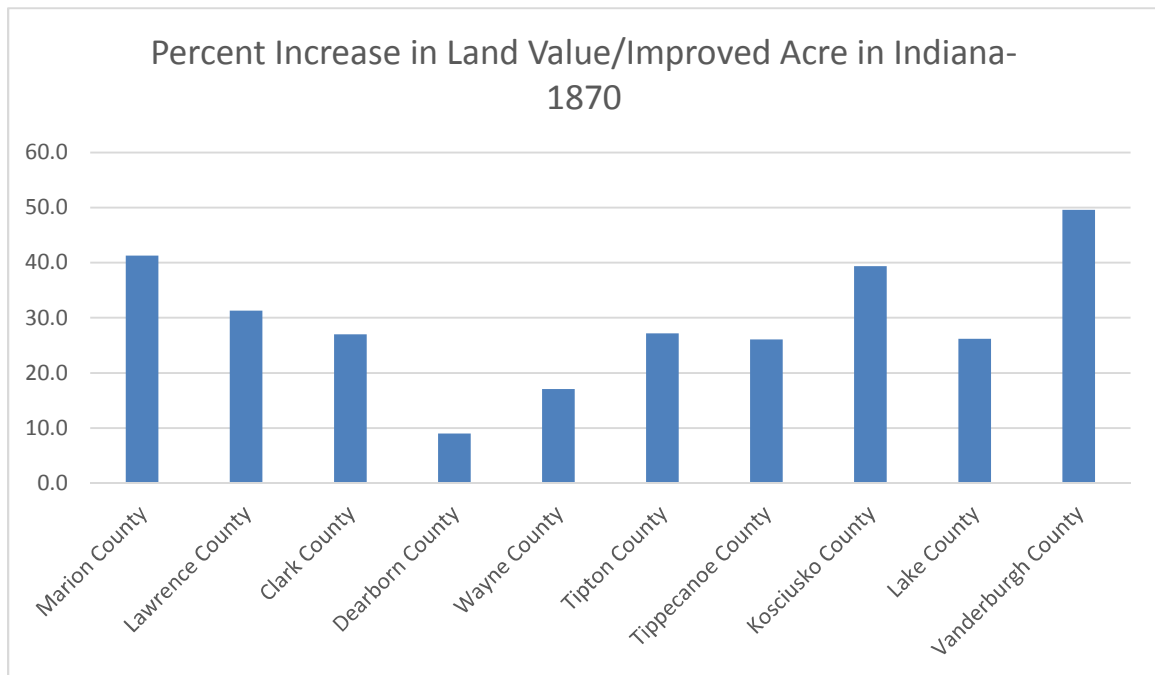


Figure 53: Percent Increase in Land Value/Improved Acre in Indiana-1870

⁶⁵⁷ As stated above, Vanderburgh County, as is Lawrence County in this instance, was a statistical outlier in this category because its land values were so low in the 1860 census. The high rate of increase is unsurprising here but does not distort the overall picture presented in this dissertation.

While Marion County was pulling away from other regions of the state regarding improved land values, it was finally emerging as an equal in the Midwest. The massive 95.4% increase in the value of improved acres from 1850-1860 declined to 41.3% from 1860-1870. While still higher than the rest of the counties examined, Marion County was regressing to the mean, suggesting that the greatest changes induced by the introduction of the railroad were over. Only Fayette County, with a 36.8% increase approached the same level seen in central Indiana. Most other counties experienced the kind of rate of increase that allowed Marion County to move much closer in terms of overall land value/improved acre. Hamilton County, which was worth more per improved acre in 1860 only increased its rate by 19.2% from 1860-1870. Allegheny County, which was worth the most of any county studied in the 1860 census, only improved by 24.8%. Jefferson County continued its slide in the region by increasing the value of their improved acres by a slight 14.3%. What these numbers suggest is that the relationship between river and railroad were beginning to level out the playing field by lowering the environmental barriers to market participation and opening the door to farmers who had fertile land. Jefferson County, never known for its abundant agriculture, slid behind places like Marion County because agriculture in the center of the Hoosier state was more abundant. As the railroad decimated transportation barriers, the economics of agriculture changed. Places like Indianapolis, surrounded by a fertile, flat plain were able to capitalize on the excellent soil and new agricultural implements to challenge the comparative advantage held by places like Louisville in the first half of the nineteenth century.

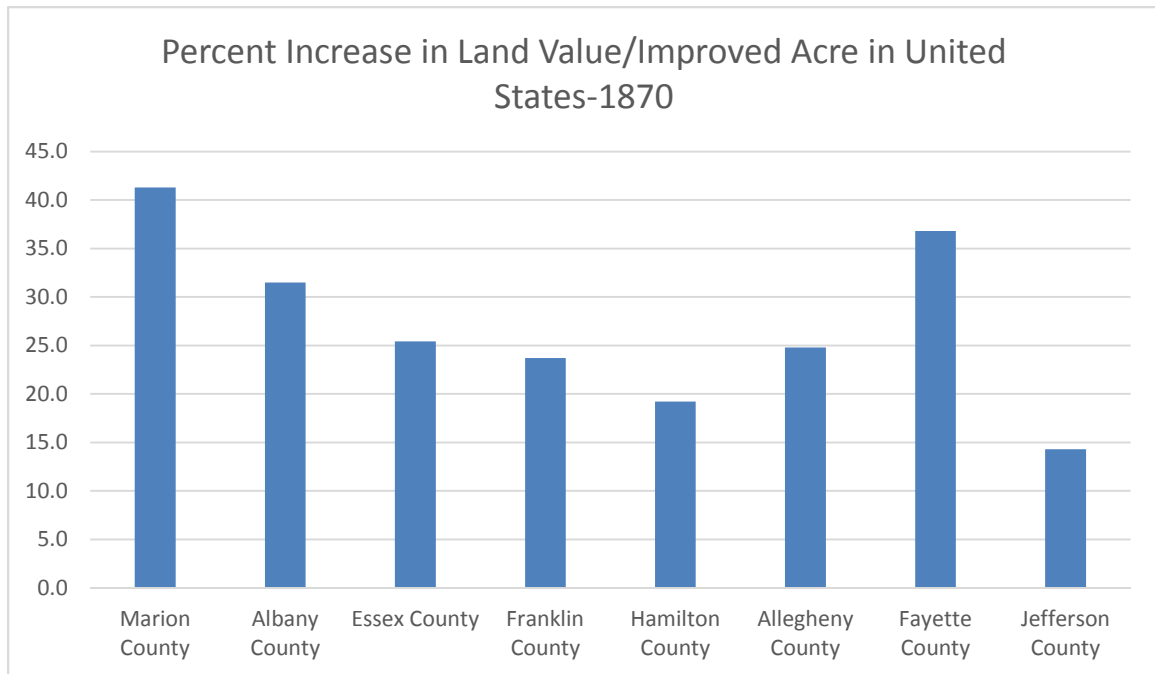


Figure 54: Percent Increase in Land Value/Improved Acre in United States-1870

The total number of farms in Indiana also shows that Marion County was losing its frontier character during the 1860s. As noted by Paul Salstrom, families tried to hand down their farms to their children so that they could maintain agricultural pursuits.⁶⁵⁸ By the end of the 1850s, families were forced to alter their farm reproduction methods by ensuring the viability of new farms based on size, which accounts for the small increase in the number of farms in Marion County and the larger rises in Kosciusko County and Lake County. The longer settled regions were less able to buy out neighbors to create extra farms because residents did not experience the telescoped growth seen in Marion County.

⁶⁵⁸ Paul Salstrom, *From Pioneering to Persevering: Family Farming in Indiana to 1880* (Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007), 104-105.

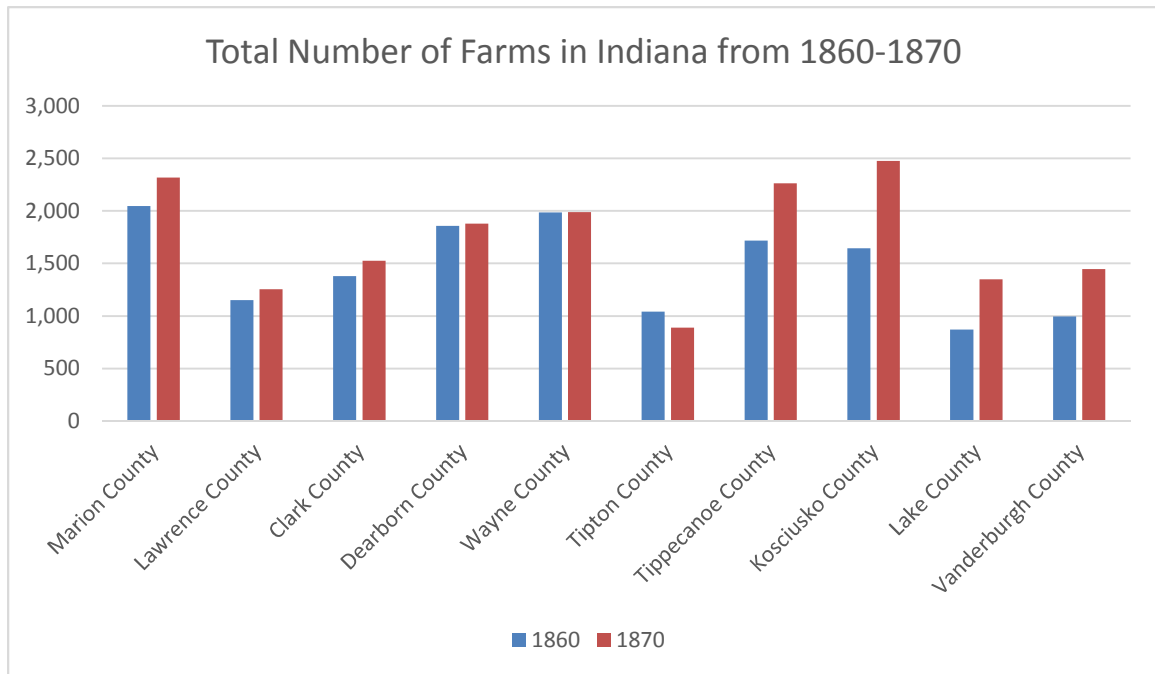


Figure 55: Total Number of Farms in Indiana from 1860-1870

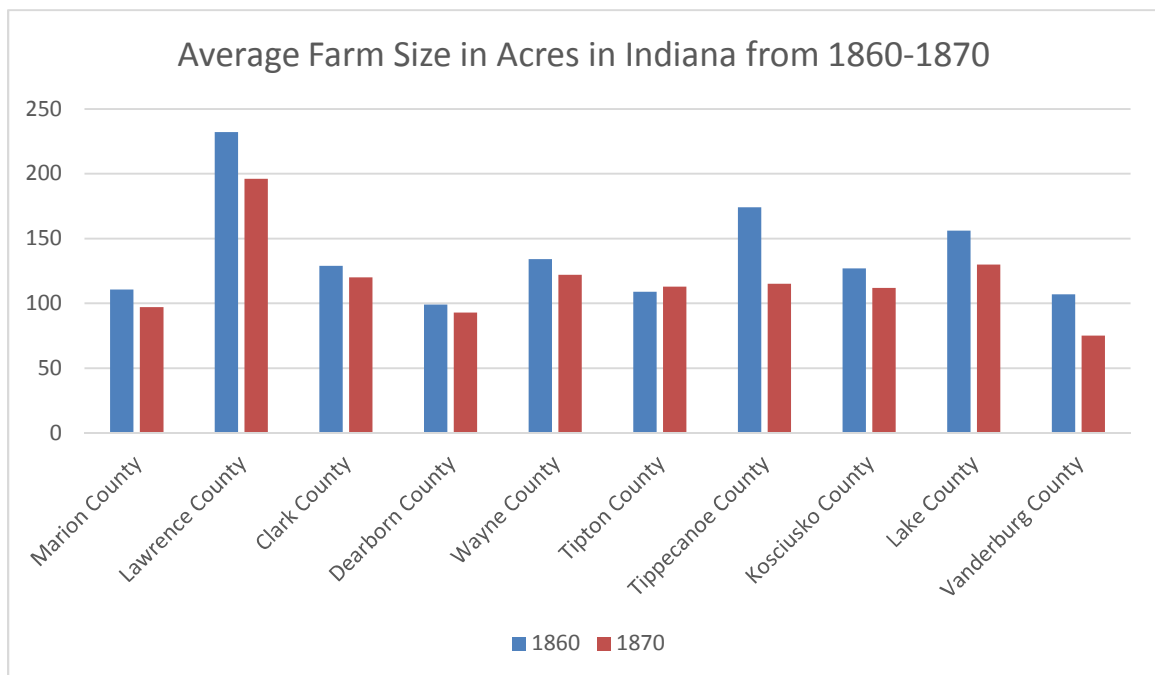


Figure 56: Average Farm Size in Acres in Indiana from 1860-1870

Examining the average farm size with the total number of farms in mind also shows that Hoosiers in Marion County were experiencing a change in agricultural

strategy seen in the rest of the state. The railroad allowed the region to fit into the rest of the state framework and mirror the decline in farm sizes, as the numbers increased. In Marion County, the average farm size dropped by 12.6% between 1860 and 1870 which is similar to counties including Lawrence with 15.5%, Kosciusko with 11.8%, Wayne with 8.9%, and Lake with 12.8%. The only county to increase in size on average was Tipton County, which improved at a meager 3.6%. The trend is clear by 1870, farm sizes were getting smaller as Hoosiers sought to reproduce the family style of agriculture that existed during the antebellum era.

Comparing the increasing number of farms and the decreasing average farm size in the regional and national variations shows that the Early West and the Eastern patterns of development diverged during the 1860s. The trend of most of the cities in the Midwest mirror the pattern seen in Marion County. Only Hamilton and Franklin Counties in Ohio got fewer farms, while also shrinking in size. All the other counties studied here including Fayette, Jefferson and Allegheny, increased the number of farms and decreased their average size. The rates of change were also similar as most counties saw a moderate decrease in farm size of between 10% and 18% and a small drop in the number of farms per county. Overall, this shows that the Midwest was beginning to separate itself as a region from the East instead of simply following eastern development patterns.

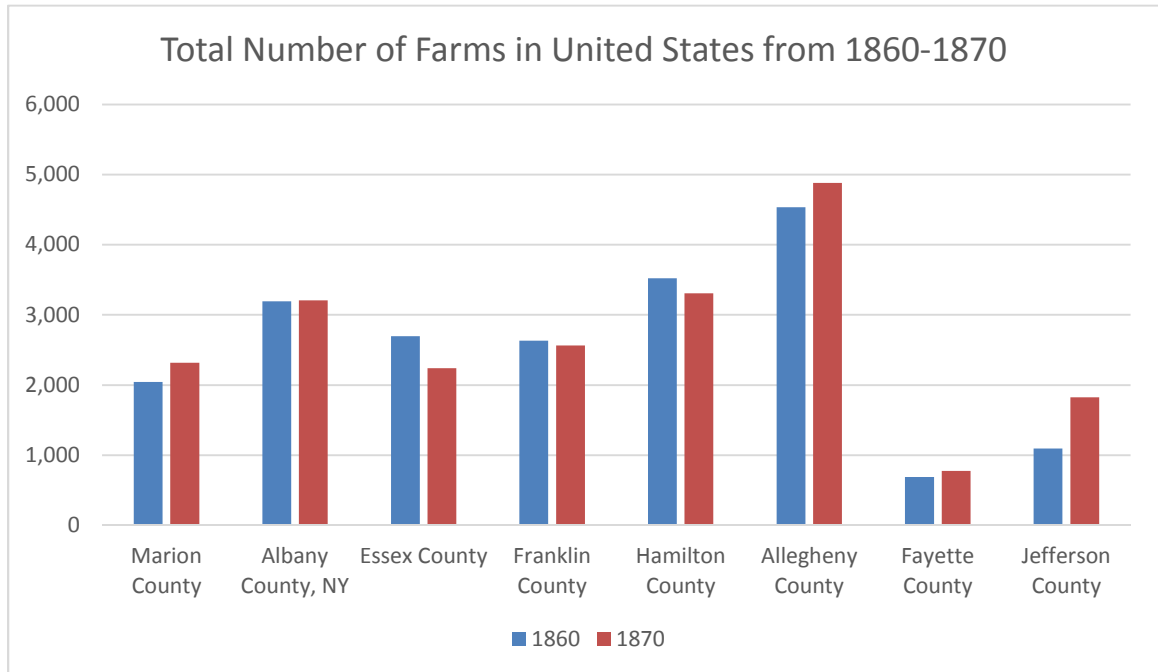


Figure 57: Total Number of Farms in United States from 1860-1870

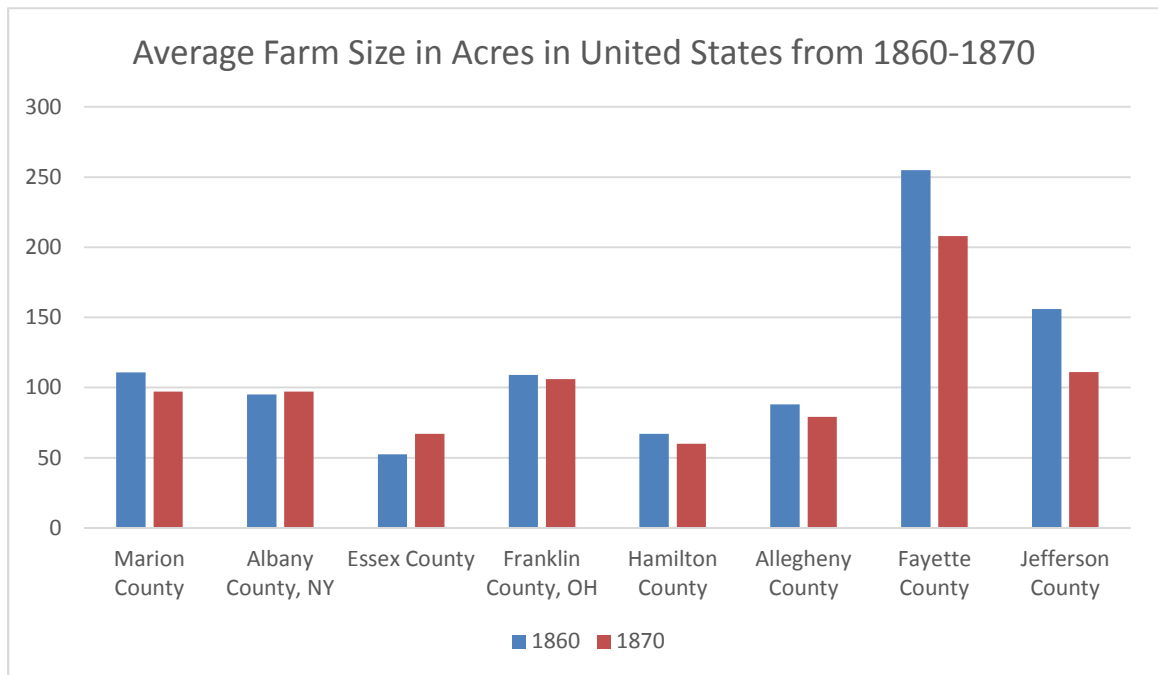


Figure 58: Average Farm Size in Acres in United States from 1860-1870

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